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# FALLEN BASTIONS

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*By the same Author*

A WAYFARER IN AUSTRIA  
THE REVOLVER REPUBLIC  
HEIRS TO THE HABSBURGS

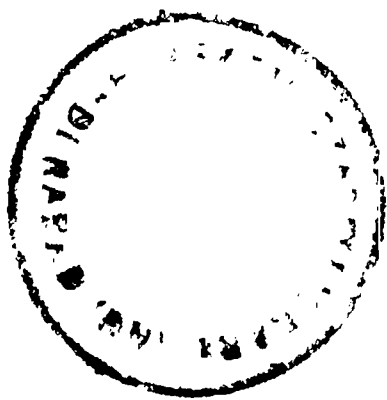
“VIENNA WALTZ”

(in *We Saw it Happen*)

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FALLEN BASTIONS  
The Central European Tragedy

By  
G. E. R. GEDYE

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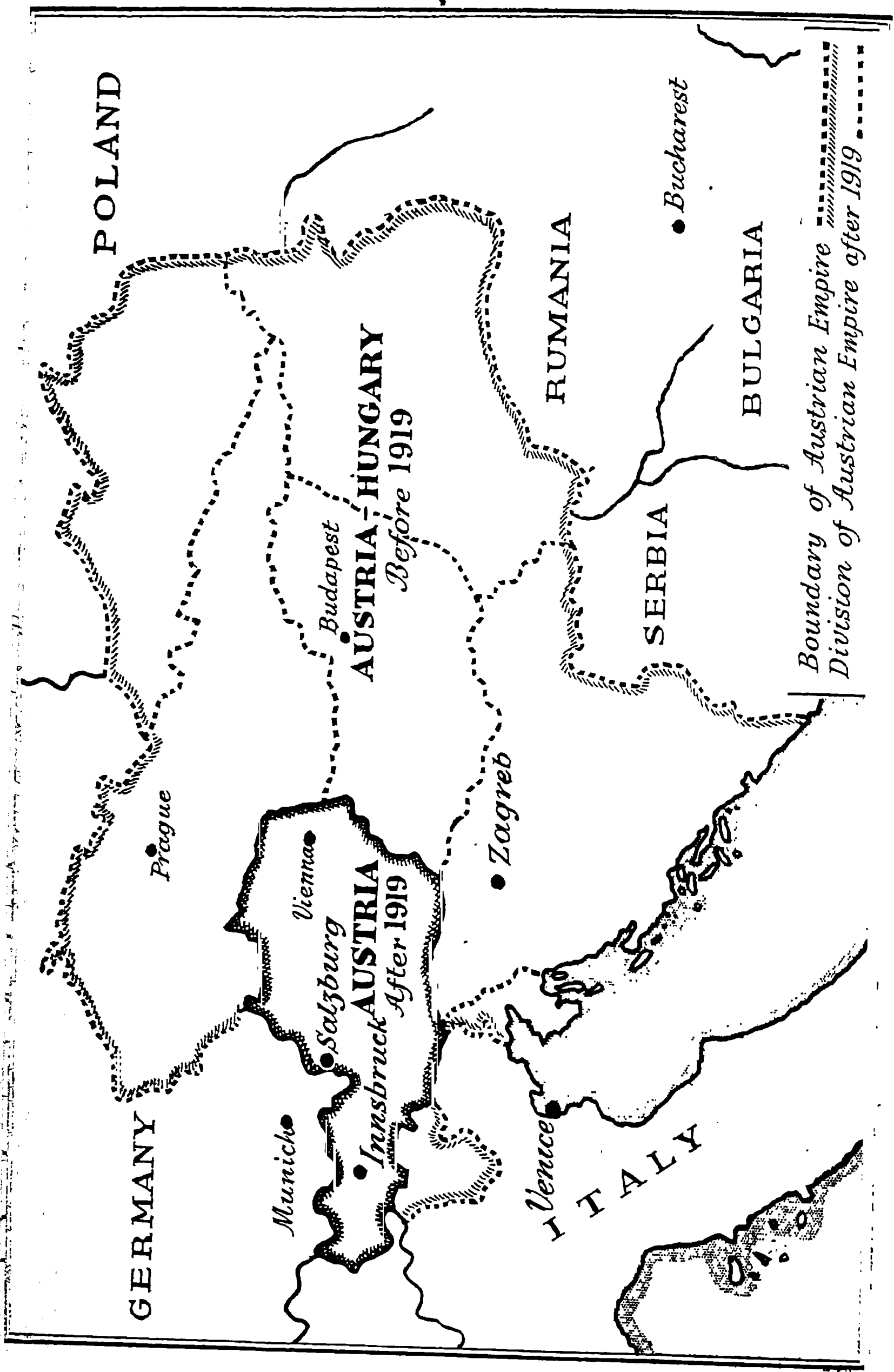
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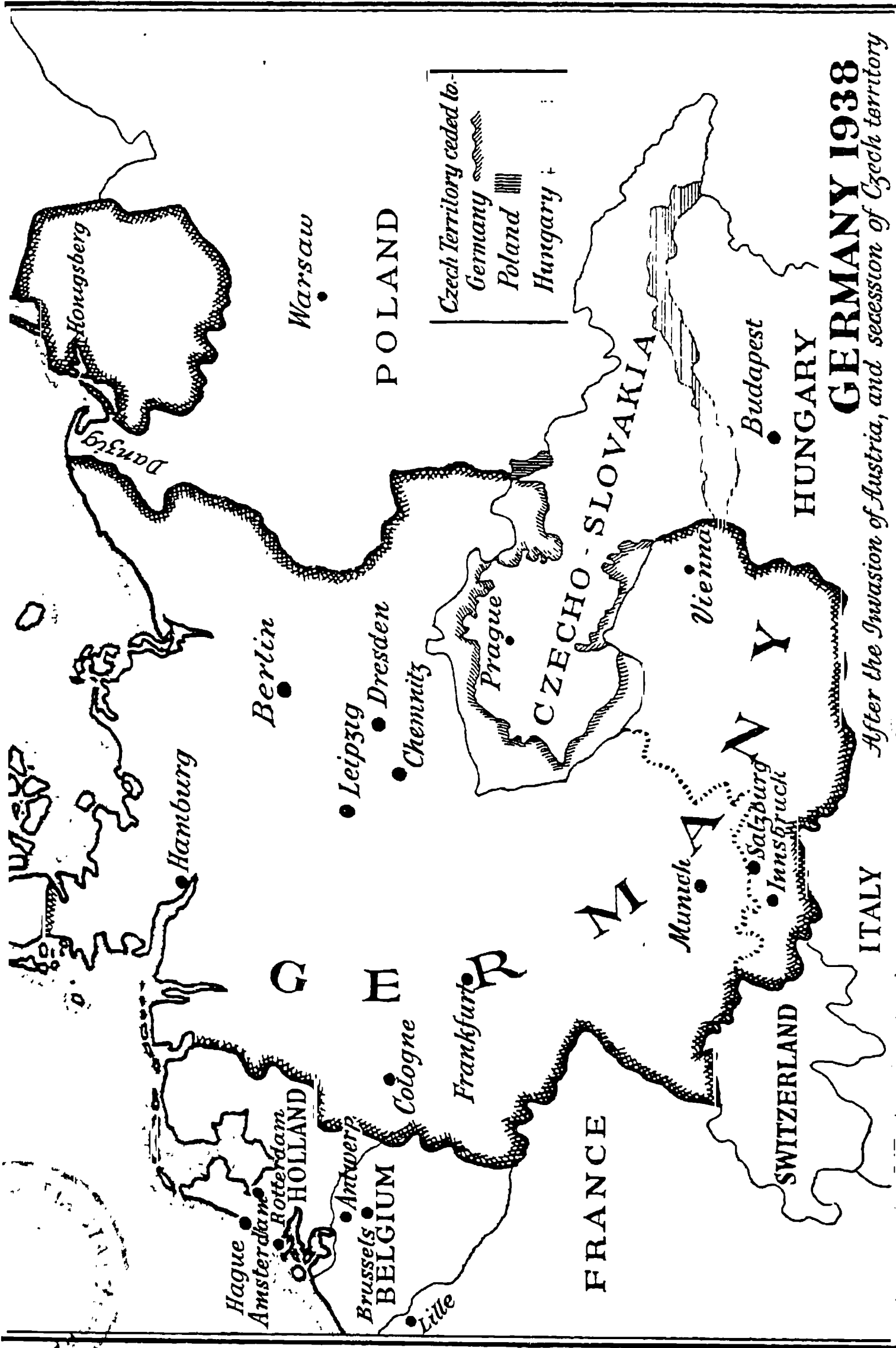
TO  
SOMEBODY'S SUMMER HOLIDAY  
AND  
SOMEBODY'S WEEK-ENDS

—NOT MINE—

*the ready sacrifice of which  
alone enabled this book to  
be written.*







# GERMANY 1938

*After the Invasion of Austria, and secession of Czech territory*

## FOREWORD

IT IS USUAL IN LAUNCHING A BOOK OF THIS KIND FOR A journalist to say that any opinions expressed in it are solely his own. In the case of this book it may seem superfluous to say so, but it is a fact which is herewith placed on record.

If by any chance you were in London when Mr. Chamberlain came back from his Four-Power Conference with Herr Hitler, Signor Mussolini and M. Daladier, and were one of the crowd which applauded him, you will probably say "Thank God!"

If, on the other hand, you happened to be one of the crowd which saw him off for Berchtesgaden with shouts of "Stand by Czecho!" you may find that my way of looking at things is a good deal like your own.

As Winston Churchill has told America, "the stations are closing down, the lights are going out." How many in England, I wonder, grasped the significance of his remark on the same occasion:—

"I do not know how long such liberties will be allowed, but there is still time for those to whom freedom and parliamentary government mean something to consult together."

There is still time, but, I think, only just time. That is why, at whatever cost, I had to write this book—while there is time.

G. E. R. GEDYE.

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## CHAPTER I

### LINE UP

SATURDAY, APRIL 9TH, 1938.

"I stand here, because I flatter myself that I can do more than Herr Schuschnigg. I have shown through my life that I can do more than these dwarfs, who ruled this country into ruin. Whether in a hundred years' time anyone will remember the names of my predecessors here, I do not know, but my name will stand as the name of the great son of this country."

"SIEG HEIL ! SIEG HEIL ! SIEG HEIL !  
EIN VOLK ! EIN REICH ! EIN FÜHRER !  
SIEG HEIL ! SIEG HEIL ! SIEG HEIL !  
HEIL DEM FÜHRER ! DANK DEM FÜHRER !  
WIR DANKEN DIR, ADOLF HITLER !  
SIEG HEIL ! SIEG HEIL ! SIEG HEIL !  
SIEG HEIL ! SIEG HEIL !"

As one man the 20,000 members of the Nazi formations assembled in the disused Vienna North-West Station chanted the mechanical phrases which their movement had taught them. In these regimented shouts was all the soul of the Nazi movement—the militarisation of enthusiasm, the herd instinct, the mob spirit, the threatening, jubilant fanaticism of men who had surrendered gladly every iota of individuality to idolatrous worship of the man addressing them in terms of such extravagant self-praise. But a sense of the ridiculous is incompatible with yielding to the mass-mesmerism which had induced these people to swallow hook, line and sinker the bait of "Blood and Soil, Bread and Work", to betray rejoicingly their country's liberty to the mighty neighbour. From the latter's clutches had been preserved for twenty years of struggle that little country's gold, iron-ore, cellulose, food and manpower by the "dwarfs", as this chivalrous victor described the men whom his mighty war-machine had just hounded into

exile or prison. And I thought back to another speaker to whose last speech on the radio I had listened just a month ago and a day before.

"Austrian men and Austrian women: This day has placed us in a tragic and decisive situation. I have to give my Austrian fellow-countrymen the details of the events of the day.

"The German Government to-day handed to President Miklas an ultimatum, with a time-limit attached, ordering him to nominate as Chancellor a person to be designated by the German Government and to appoint members of a Cabinet on the orders of the German Government; otherwise, German troops would invade Austria.

"I declare before the world that the reports put into circulation concerning disorders by the workers, the shedding of streams of blood and the allegation that the situation had got out of the control of the Government, are lies from A to Z.

"President Miklas asks me to tell the people of Austria that we have yielded to force, since we are not prepared even in this terrible situation to shed blood. We decided to order the troops to offer no serious"—the speaker corrected himself and said—"to offer no resistance.

"So I take my leave of the Austrian people, with the German word of farewell, uttered from the depths of my heart—'God protect Austria'."

As that voice died away, I heard the voices of a few loyal Austrians surrounding Austria's last Chancellor echoing softly the patriotic slogan under which he had fought for four years—just the name of their doomed Fatherland: "Oesterreich, Oesterreich!" There came across the ether for the last time, played with infinite pathos, and very, very softly, the strains of Austria's national anthem—so like, yet so subtly different from *Deutschland über Alles*, and all was over. Good-bye, Austria!

Was it good-bye? Will the genius of this country, now submerged beneath the Brown flood, its accents drowned in the blaring loud-speakers of the Third Reich, its literature pulped in the Goebbels propaganda machine, its melody silenced by the eternal Horst Wessel song, never see a come-back? Will the world really forget the alleged "dwarfs" and remember only the self-proclaimed giant? Will it forget the physical dwarf Engelbert Dollfuss and remember only the man who shot

him down like a bolting rabbit, Otto Planetta, whom the Third Reich is canonising for his deed? Quick, then, before all is forgotten that was Austria, let me jot down recollections of the last twelve years which I have passed so happily, mainly in recording in Vienna the country's struggles, sorrows and joys.

The Austria to which I came as Central European Correspondent of *The Times* (or, as I learned to call it later when I became associated with the *New York Times*, "the London Times," or briefly "Lontimes") was not the immediate post-war, nor the inflationary Austria, but "League of Nations Austria". The flood-tide of revolution had ebbed some years before, the wild storms of inflation, with its fantastic rows of 000's added to the currency unit, had subsided and some of its wreckage been cleared away. I had come to Austria of the reconstruction period. Politically there was stagnation. There was a deadlock between the forces of Social-Democracy, still the more powerful, and those of reaction, which as yet dared only to dream of a restoration of the good old days when the "class system" of voting kept the masses where they belonged—well down. Vienna had been a playground for the aristocracy, plutocracy, the officer and higher official castes, with the Catholic Church ruling almost as co-equal with the Habsburgs. Could this highly desirable state of affairs ever be restored in what was now "Red Vienna"? It seemed impossible. But there was a great Churchman, a subtle political intriguer, at the head of the State. The Chancellor, Monsignore Seipel, was playing a great game slowly. He was winning the confidence of foreign financiers, the trust of the victorious Powers in the recent War. Britain, France and Italy had treated Austria ruthlessly enough, but they did not want to see her utterly destroyed. Germany had indeed been humbled to the dust, disarmed, starved, robbed of territories, frontier provinces placed under the occupation of foreign armies, her industry and commerce enslaved to produce fantastic sums as "reparations" to the Entente which should cripple her for centuries. Yet there remained a fear of a German come-back—after many generations, of course—and a resumption of German power politics, with its *Drang nach dem Osten*. The old Teutonic plan might be revived—the scheme for a drive to the East, down through the Balkans via the oilfields and granaries of

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Rumania, across Bulgaria, cutting the British artery of the Suez Canal, on to the oilfields of Mesopotamia, Iraq—a spear-head thrust into the heart of the British Empire, with an incidental stab at Syria and the colonial Empire of France. Before the War the great Austro-Hungarian Monarchy had barred the way. Its place had been taken by the Succession States of its former subject races liberated by the Allies through the War, and by the Republic of Austria. Little pity though there was at first in Paris and London for the Austrians, they were a bastion—the most essential bastion—in the chain of States barring the way to the Teutonic flood, should it ever again arise. Monsignore Ignaz Seipel held few cards, but they were good ones, astutely played. There were tricks to be won for his country—and beyond that (never to be talked of) a chance of scoring below the line for his Church and his class. In the decayed salons of inflation-battered Vienna where one walked across precious Oriental rugs to dine off costly plate on a little cold sausage and black bread beneath the eyes of old masters, they whispered of the possibility of another come-back (also, of course, years ahead), a come-back of caste and privilege. “You need us as much as we need you”, was Seipel’s line abroad. “Leave us the political Cinderella of Europe, and we throw ourselves into the arms of Berlin. Let the masses continue to starve, and they will bring Moscow to Central Europe.” So the victors dipped their hands into bulging pockets, grudgingly enough, and Austria’s reconstruction through the League Loans began. That was the national and international side, and as far as that went, Seipel deserved well of every one of his fellow-countrymen. But at the same time he sowed the seeds of the policy whose fruit was to be the destruction of Austria’s independence. For simultaneously he played for the score below the line. The first thing was to get foreign money into the country, the second to persuade international finance—naturally only after it had been committed to support of Austria—that its money would never be really safe until the power of the Left had been broken, Red Vienna swept into oblivion and the pale ghosts of the Habsburgs brought within the precincts of the Hofburg and Schönbrunn. Seipel’s successors carried his anti-Socialist policy to triumph in 1934, thereby destroying democratic Austria and leaving the way clear for the walk-over of the Fascist invaders of 1938.

The game had just about reached this stage when I came to start my work in Vienna. The first League Loans had already started the healing process with the wounds of military disaster and inflation. That Vienna had begun to be herself again was brought home to me at my first *Wiener Frühstück* on the sunny terrace of the Café Heinrichshof on an August morning in 1925. There was *Schlagobers* on the coffee. That was the essential. (Within four weeks of Herr. Hitler setting foot in Vienna, there was no more *Schlagobers* on the coffee, even in the plutocratic Hotel Bristol. That, perhaps, was incidental—and yet significant.) There were eggs, too—as many as you wanted, served *à la Viennoise* without their shells in a sort of champagne bumper, or otherwise, and real coffee supplied from the stores of the old monarchy's coffee-king, Julius Meinl, whom the break-up of the Monarchy had made an international trader with shops in eight countries. There was milk with it, too, from the Alpine-pastured cattle of Carinthia and Tyrol. I noted these things because this was not my first visit to Austria. In 1921 I had spent a night in Innsbruck with my brother, and had breakfasted off acorn coffee, pith-doped grey-black bread and a pale-pink, gummy substance which had to be accepted as jam. In 1922 I had spent Christmas in Vienna and on the Semmering, where there was indeed enough food to eat, but some of it had obviously had too close relations with chemical laboratories.

Right from the start, like ninety-nine per cent. of foreigners coming here for the first time, I fell for the charm of Vienna, for its *Gemütlichkeit*, its admixture of southern graces with the harder Teutonic qualities I had known in Germany. I called the first day at the Chancellery on the Ballhausplatz, where Metternich had spun tangled webs of reaction, where Dollfuss twelve years later was to bleed to death in the hands of his Nazi captors, and was enchanted by everything. The very address was an echo of spy thrillers by William Le Queux, who had filled my boyhood with the romance of international intrigue. The head of the Press Bureau, Gesandter Ludwig, a huge, broad-shouldered man with all the guilelessness of an educated son of the soil in his bucolic features, received me with a display of affection which made me feel that he expected, not the League of Nations, but me to prove the saviour of

Austria. He addressed me as "*Herr Kollege*"—"Mr. Colleague", as "*Lieber Herr Kollege*" and "*Lieber Freund*", which was extremely flattering from so great a man. Fulfilment of my every wish was promised almost before I could formulate it, and when we parted, he did not brusquely bid me good-bye, but "he had the honour". I got quite hot under the collar when at luncheon the following day my first English mentor in Austria, Owen Phillpotts, cousin of Eden Phillpotts and Commercial Attaché at the British Legation, told me always to count on Gesandter Ludwig for polite phrases—and little more. Indeed, in the first stages of my infatuation for Vienna, I had to suppress indignation very frequently when older hands (Phillpotts had worked for years before the War as a newspaper-man in Vienna, and later as British Consul) warned me not to take Viennese charm quite at its face value. In later stages I entirely failed to suppress indignation at the complete non-fulfilment by Herr Ludwig of his ever-flowing streams of promises. He was a man from whom it seemed impossible to expect either fulfilment or a frank refusal of a request. . . . But enough of complaints. *De mortuis* is a sentiment to which the honest writer should rarely pay heed. Ludwig—so far as I know—is not dead, and yet that has happened to him which must still the tongue of reproach for the past faults of any man. Minister Ludwig—as he later became—formed one of the first batch of prisoners transported in 1938 from their native Austria by the Nazis to the hell of Dachau. He had been too loyal a servant of Seipel and all his successors right down to Schuschnigg, who, whatever their party allegiances, had one grave fault in common—they were good Austrians. How often we of the Anglo-American Press community in Vienna, driven to frenzy by Ludwig's unfulfilled promises, indefinite postponements and buttery evasions, said jokingly among ourselves: "One compensation and one alone we'll enjoy if the Nazis triumph one day—they'll shoot Ludwig". I think we all feel bad about that to-day, and to arouse pangs of conscience in hard-boiled journalists is an achievement which only knowledge of such unspeakable horrors as those of a German concentration camp could effect.

In the Bundeskanzleramt on the Ballhausplatz also I early became acquainted with another important aspect of Austria in the shape of Ludwig's second-in-command, Dr. Martin Fuchs.

A wizened little Jew with a face like a whiskery spider, intelligent and kindly eyes twinkling behind huge horn-rimmed glasses, he was typical of the invaluable service which the Jews had performed for Austria for several centuries. Never in the first place, which was reserved for more or less distinguished men of non-Jewish stock, there was usually a hard-working and brilliantly intelligent Jew in the back office, who spoon-fed his chief with devoted loyalty both to him and to the country which he felt to be his own as much as did any German-bred Austrian. When my articles irritated Ludwig, he always greeted me with the same bland friendship, and when they drove him to desperation, he invited me to luncheon, at an unfixed date. It was Fuchs who had the job of telling me off, and very well he did it, with an appeal to reason, to a consideration of wider issues than those which the momentary situation suggested, a glimpse of historical motives and some release of inside information which often put a different aspect on things. From Fuchs, the Jew, I learned most of what I knew of the workings of the mind of Seipel, the great Catholic Prelate. It was Fuchs who secured me the interviews which Ludwig promised and forgot about. Fuchs was a lucky man. Always delicate, he died many years before the Nazis had a chance to reward his services to his country according to their estimate of his deserts.

Not so long out of uniform myself, and surrounded up till a few months of my arrival in Vienna by the uniforms of the British and French armies of occupation on the Rhine, it is not surprising that one of the most vivid recollections of early days in Vienna should be that of my first glimpse of the Austrian army. They came along the Ringstrasse near the Schottentor, two companies returning from a short route march. The Captain at the head rode a badly-groomed horse and seemed to have little pride in his command. Behind him came the big drum—not slung from the shoulders of a husky drum-major, but reposing in a diminutive cart drawn by a diminutive pony behind which strolled unencumbered a lanky soldier administering leisurely and encouraging taps to either side of the drum. I had never seen such lackadaisical drum-beating in my life, and I am afraid I took it as a sign of the decomposition of Austrian military strength; the pony and cart, however, were not, as I first imagined, a concession to a half-starved army

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with poor physique, but a relic of the great armies of the Habsburgs, to be perpetuated in later years when the Austrian army had again become an efficient instrument. Behind the drum came the troops in shabby uniforms, out of step and with no march-discipline. The little detachment, I soon learned, was characteristic of the period. In 1918 the Imperial armies with their harsh discipline had broken up, and been replaced by a fine Republican force, filled with revolutionary fire and hampered only by under-feeding—the Volkswehr. Its creator was the first Republican Minister of War, the Socialist leader Dr. Julius Deutsch. He later became the commander of the Socialist Party Guard, the Republikanische Schutzbund, and directed its gallant but unsuccessful defence of Republican institutions against the Clerical Government and the Heimwehr-Fascists during their counter-revolution of February 1934. After the Schutzbund's defeat he escaped, wounded, through the enemy lines to Czechoslovakia. Soon after the beginning of Franco's military rebellion, he placed his services at the disposal of the Spanish Government and did splendid work training German and Austrian volunteers of the International Brigade. Long before the day when I first met the Austrian army, Julius Deutsch and the other Socialist Ministers had fallen from power and his Volkswehr was a thing of the past. What I saw was a transition army in course, as the Clericals said, of being "de-politicised", but actually "re-politicised" as an instrument for Clerical reaction instead of for republican socialism. Hence the obvious lack of enthusiasm and air of discontent among the men, most of them still Republicans and Socialists officered by reactionary Clericals. Hence also the hang-dog look of the officer, his aims altogether at variance with those of his men, and as yet without the strength to realise them. That strength was supplied by Karl Vaugoin as Minister of War. For his anti-Marxist services the Nazis have rewarded the latter also with Dachau. On the same prisoners' transport was the Socialist Major Alexander Eiffler, Chief of Staff of the Republikanische Schutzbund, who owed a long term of imprisonment to General Vaugoin.

It was not long before I paid my footing in the way that all newly-arrived journalists did, by writing an article in praise of Vienna *Gemütlichkeit*, "charm", whipped cream and tolerance. It was a good article, I still maintain, although it only

found a different way of saying what so many had said before me and continued to say after me. *The Times* liked it and gave it a good place. It was merely an unfortunate accident for me that just as it had been set up in type and was waiting to be run off on the press, a one-column telephone message, also from me, reached the office and had to appear simultaneously with my tribute to the charm of the sentimental, easy-going Viennese, under the headlines "Rioting in Vienna. Fierce Demonstrations against the Jews." Thus my first stories from Vienna, like my last, twelve and a half years later, dealt with street excesses against the Jews. I had only been in the capital a fortnight when a World Zionist Congress was held in the Konzerthaus. Seeing that the object of the Zionists is to get all the Jews out of Austria and other countries and settle them in Palestine, one might have expected that the Zionist Congress would have been given a warm welcome by the anti-Semites of Vienna, together with a handsome contribution to their emigration funds. In point of fact, these internationally famous members of the Jewish Community visiting Vienna were received with showers of stones, organised jeering mobs in the streets and all kinds of physical violence. Hundreds of police had to turn out to clear a way through the crowds of students and other young hooligans to the Konzerthaus. Anyone driving along the Ringstrasse in this direction in a motor-car was liable to be stopped, hauled out and roughly handled by the demonstrators. I myself had to use physical force to avoid being dragged out of my taxi-cab by crazy youths who clambered over the back, armed with walking-sticks, convinced that no one could have any business near the Zionist Congress unless he were a member of the hated race. At the time this seemed to me little more than horseplay, jolly good fun for the students, an amusing adventure and good copy for myself and rather an honour for the Jews, whose dignified and unperturbed pursuit of their conference plans made the students look merely ridiculous. Here also I had a great deal to learn. (In 1938, with the same lack of logic, the Nazis arrested and sent to Dachau their forerunners in the work of "cleansing Vienna of the Jews"—the Zionist leaders.) A fortnight later I was hard put to it to convince the British Minister in Budapest that my story of the violence I had witnessed in the Vienna streets and the good-natured tolerance I had discovered in the hearts of the Viennese.

were both true in substance and in fact. To-day, with the picture of the Vienna from which I was expelled by the German secret police a few weeks ago still vivid in my mind, I am hard put to it again, this time to convince myself, that this last picture is not the real Vienna. It is not so much all the brutalities of the Austrian Nazis which I have witnessed or verified direct from the victims which blurs the image of the Vienna I thought I knew. It is the heartless, grinning, soberly dressed crowds on the Graben and the Kärntnerstrasse, the "Strube's-Little-Man" class of Austria, the fluffy Viennese blondes, fighting one another to get closer to the elevating spectacle of an ashen-faced Jewish surgeon on hands and knees before half a dozen young hooligans with Swastika armlets and dog-whips that sticks in my mind. His delicate fingers, which must have made the swift and confident incisions that had saved the lives of many Viennese, held a scrubbing-brush. A storm-trooper was pouring some acid solution over the brush—and his fingers. Another sluiced the pavement from a bucket, taking care to drench the surgeon's striped trousers as he did so. And the Viennese—not uniformed Nazis or a raging mob, but the Viennese Little Man and his wife—just grinned approval at the glorious fun. That is the picture which I have somehow to reconcile with that of the soft-hearted, over-sentimental folk whom I thought I had got to know so well.

\* \* \* \* \*

What was the origin of this little State which Hitler claims—because, as he says, he feels himself to be the appointed ruler of every German, whatever his country may be—to dispose of at will? Go to Austria to-day, and you walk like Alice straight through the looking-glass. Patriotism to one's country is high treason; treachery and conspiracy, patriotism; loyalty to the Constitution to which one took an oath, betrayal; devotion to the hereditary Monarchy, the vilest treachery of all. And all this is retrospective. The prisons have been crammed with aristocrats and officers who never plotted, but upheld a sentimental loyalty to their hereditary rulers, the concentration camps with men who put their hands in their pockets to find the money to enable Schuschnigg to finance his last appeal to the nation to decide for themselves in a plebiscite whether they cherished their independence or not. Officers, highly placed civil servants, policemen, the conscientious little bureaucrat

loyal to his oath are now all labelled traitors in Looking-Glass Austria. None of this is for resisting or conspiring against the successful Nazi revolution—for this they never had a chance, most of them having been arrested before it had really got under way—but for not having forsworn themselves *before* the revolution by plotting against the legal Government of the country, for maintaining their loyalty to the Government and Constitution. How to make comprehensible what has happened?

Well, let us imagine that Mr. Roosevelt—better, Father Coughlin after having overthrown Roosevelt—in New York declares that God had told him that he is the born leader of the whole English-speaking peoples throughout the world. After twelve months' terrorism, bomb-throwing and infernal-machine explosions, in 1934 his agents revolt in London, seize No. 10 Downing Street and Broadcasting House, kill the Prime Minister and start a bloodthirsty revolt throughout Britain under the insignia "Hail, Father Coughlin! One People, One State, One Leader!" Before Coughlin can send troops to support the revolt, France warns him that she will sink every transport. Thereupon the revolt is put down, the murderer of Stanley Baldwin is hanged with twelve other rebel leaders, and Father Coughlin, after waiting to see whether they would succeed, disowns his British supporters and condemns their action. After a period of quiescence the plotting begins again. American dollars pour into England, secret American printing-presses proclaim Father Coughlin's right to rule, deride the memory of murdered Stanley Baldwin, whom the country has been taught to revere as a saint, and threaten Chamberlain himself with murder. An active propaganda in army, navy, police, air force and the civil service seduces many from their allegiance and secretly enrols them in illegal Coughlinite formations. One day Father Coughlin invites Mr. Chamberlain to meet him at the White House. When Mr. Chamberlain produces all kinds of evidence of Father Coughlin's subversive activities in his country, the fanatical priest roundly denounces him—the Premier of Great Britain—as a "traitor" to the Anglo-Saxon race, admits all the plots, confronts him with the plans for the invasion and subjugation of Britain by the United States forces, introduces him to the military, naval and air force commanders, who show him their plans of operation, and tells Neville Chamberlain that if he makes any attempt to

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suppress the "Coughlin Rebellion" which is about to be launched at Coughlin's own behest in Britain, he, Father Coughlin, will carry through the invasion because his great Anglo-Saxon heart "will not tolerate that Anglo-Saxon shall fire on Anglo-Saxon". France has meantime joined in a world conspiracy with Coughlin to destroy the democracies, called the "Axis Paris-New York", and when the harassed Chamberlain appeals to France for aid, the only answer he gets is that Premier Léon Blum is ski-ing in the Hautes Pyrenées and must not be disturbed. Then Coughlin's organised defiance of the law breaks out in Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, Bristol and Southampton. Rebel flags are carried through the streets and the Union Jack is torn down amid howls of execration. The forbidden "Father Coughlin Ballad" is sung and "God Save the King" hooted down by the secretly organised Coughlin storm-troopers. "How do you do?" is replaced by the forbidden password "Hail, Coughlin", and the Coughlinites find huge satisfaction for their limited intellects in parading endlessly up and down the Strand, raising their arms tirelessly to perfect strangers (also wearing the Coughlin badge) in an automatic and rather ridiculous gesture, shouting their entirely meaningless password. The bulk of the terrorised population appeals to Chamberlain for protection. He knows if he tells the police or the troops to put down the terrorist banners, Coughlin will loose bombers on Britain "to prevent Anglo-Saxon being slaughtered by Anglo-Saxon".

Chamberlain goes to Birmingham, and from his native city suddenly makes a ringing appeal to the people of Britain to declare at a National Referendum whether they want to retain their independence or to be swallowed up by a Coughlin-ruled America. The appeal rouses enormous enthusiasm. Chamberlain fixes the referendum to be held within four days, so as to give Coughlin no time to organise further electoral terrors and flood the country with American dollars for subversive propaganda. Two days later come three ultimata from Coughlin in rapid succession on a single day. Neville Chamberlain is to resign, King George to appoint as Premier a Coughlinite to be designated by Coughlin, and the referendum is to be cancelled. Simultaneously the Coughlin warships, airplanes and troop transports cross the Channel from the continental ports, where they have been massing prior even to the Coughlin-Chamberlain

interview. The same evening American troops, who outnumber the British army by ten to one, are landed a day's march from London. Chamberlain bows to force and resigns to avoid bloodshed. So then what? Just this:—

Chamberlain is arrested, King George deposed, the Duke of Connaught carried off to exile in New Mexico. Sir Alexander Cadogan, permanent head of the Foreign Office, Sir Robert Vansittart, Diplomatic Adviser to His Majesty's Government, Mr. Rex Leeper of the Press Department of the Foreign Office, the Lord Mayor of London, the Duke of Northumberland, the entire "Cliveden Set" and thousands more, disappear behind prison walls under a *lettre-de-cachet* system. They are put to menial tasks, clearing lavatories, waiting table on the Coughlin guards and washing dishes and motor-cars. Most of the police are arrested and those organised in conspiratorial bands promoted. The mutineers of Invergordon, together with anyone dismissed on suspicion of Communist sabotage, are paraded and praised to the skies, while at the same time Bill Gallacher, Harry Pollitt and other Communist leaders are terribly tortured in the notorious Edinburgh concentration camp. The houses of loyal citizens of Britain throughout the country are handed over to the Coughlin guards to plunder. A warrant is issued for the arrest of the Duke of Windsor, although he has lived abroad for years, for "treason" towards Coughlin and the Anglo-Saxon race. Scots are handed over to the mob to plunder, beat and insult. They are deprived of all chance of earning a living and the frontiers hermetically closed to prevent their escape. The Scots' suicide rate shoots up 1200 per cent. in one day—and stays up. All Scotland and half England know that many of these suicides are brutal murders, but none dares say so. The resentment of the under-dog against capitalist exploitation is canalised by the Coughlinites and directed against the Scots, who, rich and poor, men and women, are denounced as the sole exploiters of the people, accused of every bestial crime of degeneracy and the mob incited to savage them, while Bobbies with the Coughlinite badge on their arms grin approval. The Coughlin leaders lay wreaths on the grave of Baldwin's murderer, and on the anniversary of the crime there are requiem masses and celebrations in honour of the murderer. Those connected with his arrest and trial are persecuted, and a whole string of trials of patriotic Englishmen for high treason is announced to be held. •



Exaggerated? Very little, if at all, even down to the substituted names, as we shall see later. Austria never formed any more part of the Prussian-German Empire over which Hitler rules than Great Britain ever did of America—above all, of a Coughlin America. The Holy Roman Empire was ruled—in so far as this loose state-group was controlled by any central authority—from Vienna, not Berlin, and only after Austria had fought Prussia in 1866 was the Reich of Prussia-Germany proclaimed in 1871. In 1918 the polyglot monarchy, with its banknotes printed in eight different languages, broke up by virtue of centrifugal forces. Its subject races departed each to its own next-of-kin. Czechs and Slovaks founded Czechoslovakia, Serbs and Croats Yugoslavia, “Old” Rumanians and Transylvanians Greater Rumania. Remained the compact bloc of Magyars in the centre (who also broke away from the Austrians) and Austria itself. Little Austria, with its six million population, was the real heir to the glories of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy with its fifty-three millions—and to precious little else. As the old Monarchy crumbled and broke up from sheer inertia, the masses of Vienna took into their own hands the sceptre which fell into them almost without an effort at retention from the weak hands of the last Emperor, Karl. If not entirely bloodless—there was a clash between Communists and the new Socialist rulers of the State which cost a dozen lives—it was almost entirely so. In the Palace of Schönbrunn, Karl at last overcame the opposition of his ambitious consort and handed over to the Republican leaders the document for which they had been pressing him. The Legitimists lay stress on the fact that this was a renunciation of governance, not an abdication, either for himself or his heirs.

“Now as ever”, wrote the well-meaning but weak-willed young Emperor, “filled with unchangeable affection for my peoples, I shall not let my person hinder their free development. Through their own representatives the people have taken over government. I renounce all part in conducting the business of the State.”

The ex-Emperor was escorted in safety to his castle of Eckartsau and thence, a little later, to freedom in Switzerland. Those were the barbarous days of world war, defeat and revolution of the masses. Nobody received a licence to plunder, there was no daily toll of over a hundred “suicides” either

voluntary or involuntary, no archdukes or aristocrats were imprisoned and set to degrading labour by the masses over whom they had lorded it often insolently enough. None of these proletarian savages had reached the high stage of our modern civilisation which would have led them to herd the supporters of the fallen regime into concentration camps with their bestial torture system. They did not even think of depriving, on the grounds of race or religion, several hundred thousand of their fellow-citizens of every civic right and the possibility of earning a living, although the hierarchy of the Catholic Church had opposed and inflicted infinitely more suffering on the Vienna Socialist *Genossen* than ever the Jews on the Nazi *Parteigenossen*. These benighted Marxists never even conceived the idea of taking devout Catholics into St. Stephen's Cathedral and forcing them with kicks and curses to don the most sacred priestly vestments and perform physical jerks before the High Altar, as in March 1938 I found S.S. Guards making the Jews do in their synagogue in the Seitenstettengasse. The Austrian Republic merely asked the members of the House of Habsburg if they wished to stay in the country to make a declaration that they renounced all claim to rule and would be loyal to the new form of government. If they objected they were allowed to depart in peace to foreign countries. Instead of concentration camps, their supporters in civil service, army and police were offered further employment, conditional of course on loyalty to the new regime, and limited only by the ability of the little Republic to absorb so many applicants. The future was to show that in this matter the new rulers went too far in the direction of generosity. It was not many months before the gratitude of the servants of the old regime began to take the form of cautious plotting for the overthrow of parliamentary democracy and the restoration of privilege.

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Little Austria, left more or less as the rump after everyone else had carved off what he required from the huge joint of the old Monarchy, was in a bad way. Her neighbours, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Hungary, were obsessed with a fear that the Habsburgs would return—as indeed Karl made two attempts by Putsch to do—and from Vienna would try to reassert their sway over those who had just won liberty. The

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war-starvation resulting from the Entente's blockade was followed by the famine of inflation. The surrounding new States, following the law of self-preservation and the dictates of long-pent-up nationalism clung to what they had and at first refused all aid to the stricken Republic. The enormously wealthy churches and monasteries declined to sacrifice their treasures, and preserved them—to fall into the hands of the Third Reich twenty years later. The Entente Powers had many other things to think about. Across one frontier was a sympathetic country in a somewhat similar plight—the democratic German Republic, which had thrown off the chains of Hohenzollern as had Austria those of Habsburg. Instinctively, starving Austria looked across at slightly less starving Germany, ruled by the Majority Socialists as she was by the reformist Austrian Social-Democrats plus moderate Clericals. The demand for Anschluss, until then the monopoly of the handful of Pan-Germans, became a popular cry, a counsel of despair, yet still a counsel where no other was forthcoming. In Salzburg and other provincial centres, unofficial local plebiscites were started which produced large majorities for the Anschluss. The Socialists were not averse to throwing in their lot with the more powerful German Socialist Party, the more so because they rightly distrusted the Clericals, with whom they shared power in Austria. But before the Anschluss movement could get under way, the Entente stepped in and forbade it. The *furor teutonicus* must not have the gateway to the East flung open to it by the absorption of Austria. By such an acquisition of six and a half million subjects and all the natural resources of their country, Germany would indeed have lost the War only to gain the peace, and emerge after defeat potentially far stronger than before. It was not to achieve such a result that the Entente imperialisms had left their millions of dead on the battlefields and incurred such material costs in overcoming the dangerously competing imperialism of Germany. Obviously, however, something had to be done. There was still such a thing as world public opinion in 1918, and to condemn a whole nation to perish miserably by starvation was impossible—in those dark days. So Austrian relief work began, and parallel with its progress the propaganda for Anschluss lost reality. The average Austrian always said that when things were going badly, the Anschluss proportions were eighty for and twenty

against. In times of normal prosperity, eighty per cent. opposed and twenty still supported the Anschluss. However accurate or not these figures may have been, one thing is beyond dispute. When in 1933 Germany came under the heel of the Nazi dictators, support for union with that country, with the loss of liberty it would involve, dwindled to an insignificant minority of Austrians. Not only the Catholics who formed the Government and the Heimwehr-Fascists who supported them, but every one of their opponents, the Social-Democrats who regularly secured forty-two per cent. of the votes at elections, cried "No" to any idea of union with Hitler Germany in the most unmistakable terms.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BLOODY 15TH OF JULY

ABOUT 9 A.M. ONE LOVELY JULY MORNING IN 1927—I WAS AT the time *Daily Express* Correspondent for Austria and the Balkans—my rarely silent telephone bell rang to give me a bit of news from one of my tip-off men which looked as though it might result in that elusive thing, a *Daily Express* story. I had soon learned that it was no use confusing *Daily Express* readers with heavy political backgrounds and gradual developments. What they wanted were the big events played up big. For *The Times* one was a harvester of history, surveyed the field of countries—Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Jugoslavia, Rumania, Bulgaria and Albania—and put on record the outstanding events of each. For the *Daily Express* one was a prospector searching the daily field for something new and bright, some nugget of life which would interest and occasionally instruct the reader. I am not one of those to sniff at the *Daily Express*. A *Times* Correspondent is an artisan, skilled or unskilled. He takes the various materials which lie before him and fits them together according to the rules of that august journal. The *Daily Express* man rarely has so simple a task. He is an artist who out of the dull daily reports from all sources must see something fresh, get a new slant which his colleagues have not thought of before, create something—a *Daily Express* story. Beverley Baxter, that creative genius of the *Express*, once asked my opinion of a man past middle age who had applied for a job. I gave it—favourably. Baxter pondered. “Yes”, he said, “but after ten years on the *Morning Post*, could we hope to make a journalist out of him? It was hard enough with you, Gedye, but, then, *The Times* only had you to ruin for four years. No, I’m afraid ten years on what you call a ‘serious newspaper’ would blunt the ability of anybody to distinguish a story from an historical note.” But I had two damned good years on the *Daily Express*. The paper

at that time was quite free from political propaganda and gave its readers a square deal. Through this it had an enormous pull over one of its rivals, which took the reader's penny, and then tried to pump him full of its proprietor's reactionary opinions. At all events, during my two years on the "*D. E.*" nobody ever suggested that I should take any particular "line", nobody trimmed my stories to suit "proprietary policy", nobody suppressed facts which told against Lord Beaverbrook's pet views—and I sent quite a number of these—and nothing was inserted to modify the reading I supplied of any given situation. Whether a *Daily Express* man to-day could give his paper such a clean bill of health I have no idea. I speak of 1927 to 1929. Some of the best fellows I have met anywhere in the newspaper game have been *Daily Express* foreign correspondents. And on my holidays in England, in addition to my own paper, I always buy the *Daily Express*. A holiday at least—let not the Beaver rage or the wrath of the Brook cause it to overflow—it is most kindly meant—would not be a holiday for me without the *Daily Express* to make all the world a stage and all the men and women on it merely players. I have been constantly too close to tragedy in my daily work of the last sixteen years not to be grateful for a little light holiday relief, even if I have not the temperament to provide it day in day out like the stars of the *Express*. And the news columns of the *Daily Express* always seem to provide it for me in August. Anyway, there is always that fatuous person Beachcomber.

To return to my telephone, after a digression which would have earned me instant dismissal from Baxter. One of my tip-off men was at the other end of the wire, and he said: "Mr. Gedye, there seems to be something up on the Ringstrasse. There are thousands of people marching round Parliament, and mounted police are collecting near the Palace of Justice." I jumped into a taxi and in three minutes was opposite Parliament. There was "something up". The vast blunder of the Seipel Government, the forerunner of that by which Dollfuss in February 1934 destroyed Austria's ultimate powers of resistance to the Nazi tyranny, was in its first stages. The bloody "Fünfzehnte Juli"—July 15th, 1927, which was to earn for Seipel among the Austrian workers for all time the sobriquet of "*Der Keine Milde Prelate*"—"The No-Mercy Prelate"—was beginning.

It was the first blow struck by reaction at the Austrian Socialists, the first breach made in the walls of Red Vienna, the first—and successful—appearance of the Fascist Heimwehr. From the date of the first League Loan and the Geneva Protocols of 1923, the interests of international finance capital had been harnessed behind the idea of an Austria in which full freedom to exploit the masses, unhampered by the mild burden imposed by the social-welfare reformist Socialists, should be restored to foreign and native capital. “Old Mole Seipel” as the official Socialist organ, the *Arbeiterzeitung*, called him, had been working industriously below ground. Until 1929—with one brief interval—he kept control of Austria in his hands, and burrowed ceaselessly. His first move had been to get the Socialists out of the Government and to form a reactionary coalition with a tiny parliamentary majority of Clericals (Christian Socials) and Pan-Germans (most of whom later, as Nazis, fought the Clericals during the four years which March 11th, 1938, brought to a close). In 1937 Seipel got the Landbund (Agrarians) into this reactionary coalition; they, too, mostly became Nazis later. This was the obvious side of his anti-democratic activities. The discreetly hidden side—which led a fanatical Socialist to shoot at and seriously wound him in the early years of the Republic—was his steady but always officially denied efforts to build up an illegal party army to overthrow the power of the Socialists in Vienna, where no constitutional means could shake their firm two-thirds majority of the votes.

Seipel was a fighter of indomitable courage for the things he believed in, a great statesman, a seer of visions. One thing he lacked—a heart. Scholar, priest and ascetic, almost a life-long sufferer from the diabetes which killed him at last, he looked his rôle to the life. Spare, entirely bald, aquiline-nosed, thin-lipped, with cold, intelligent eyes and a “poker face”, he had every quality needed to enable him to take his place in the long list of brilliant political intriguers of which the College of Cardinals has thrown up a number in the course of centuries. Little Austria was far too small for a man of his political genius and ambition; he needed the field of a Richelieu. Minister in the last Imperial Government and unchallenged leader of the Clerical Party, he set himself the aim of restoring the political power of the Church and of the Habsburgs, of crushing to the earth the Social-Democrats, whom he hated as the “Red

Antichrist", and he all but succeeded in all these aims. The last his successor Dollfuss achieved; Schuschnigg reaped the harvest. Pan-Germanism, Prussianism, Seipel feared and distrusted. He did lip service indeed here and there to a vague Anschluss idea. But his idea of Anschluss was the disruption of Prussia-Germany, and the creation of a great Catholic State bloc by the further disruption of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Rumania (robbing these countries of their Catholic components, Croatia, Slovakia and Transylvania). Under the suzerainty of the Habsburgs in Vienna (who should further rule directly Austria, Hungary, Croatia, Slovakia and Transylvania), the Wittelsbachs should rule over Catholic Germany (the Rhineland, Bavaria and Württemberg) and Prussia be reduced once more to the barren Mark of Brandenburg whence she had come to bring Prussian militarism to Western Europe through her potato-fed Pommern grenadiers in 1871. The first step towards this grandiose conception was the destruction of "Red Antichrist" in Vienna.

On the break up of the Monarchy in October 1918, the retreating polyglot soldiers had brought back huge quantities of arms from the front, and abandoned them in Austria before going to their own new States. The Vienna central arms depots, too, were packed. To save some of these arms from the Entente Disarmament Commissions, they were buried or bricked up in well-chosen hiding-places, some by the Socialist-Republican troops, others by the fragments still loyal to the crumbling Monarchy. Most of the hiding-places were known to both parties, but there was a gentlemen's agreement to keep them from the Entente and not to betray one another. That agreement was violated later by Seipel when he felt strong enough and by Karl Vaugoin, as Minister of War, when they "discovered" and seized the arms reserves of the Republican Defence Corps. This body had been founded by the Socialists for the defence of the Republic when Karl Vaugoin began to turn the army into a reactionary instrument. Its counterpart was the Heimwehr or Heimatschutz. In its origin, the latter was what its name implied, bands of gallant ex-soldiers who as the Great War ended came together on the frontiers to hold off further invasions by Jugoslavs, Italians and Hungarians. In the Burgenland, Heimwehr and Schutzbund even fought for a time side by side against the Hungarian White Terrorist invasions

of Major Pronay and Colonel Lehar (brother of "Merry Widow" Lehar). They, and similar bodies such as the Frontkämpfer, were seized on by Seipel and made the instruments of an armed conspiracy against the Republic. Year after year the Seipel Government increased their illegal armament, while reducing the equally illegal armament of the Republican Defence Corps (Schutzbund). With clenched fists and teeth the Socialists had to watch the Government affording steadily increasing opportunities for the Heimwehr to provoke the workers and to see how the scales of justice at the resultant clashes were regularly weighted against the proletariat.

Early in July there had been such a clash at Schattendorf in the Burgenland. Heimwehr had opened fire from a barricaded inn on a peaceful procession of Socialists with their red flags and had killed a war cripple and a child. On July 13th and 14th the Heimwehr were brought to trial before a packed jury. The excitement among the Vienna workers was intense. At 10 p.m. on July 14th, the killers were acquitted. The Vienna police had been standing by for forty-eight hours in case of trouble when the verdict came out. But the night of July 14th passed without incident, and at 6 a.m. on the 15th, Police President Johann Schober dismissed the weary police to their beds. It was a typical piece of Austrian *Schlamperei*. For between 6 and 7 a.m. the workers arrived at their factories, bought the *Arbeiterzeitung* at the gates, and heard for the first time of the scandalous acquittal. Impromptu meetings called by the shop stewards quickly resulted in resolutions to down tools in protest against this "class justice" and to march in peaceful procession, men, women and children, to the Inner City, around the Parliament Building and back to the workers' suburbs to disperse. Such processions were not unusual in Republican Vienna. Generally discipline was maintained by the Republican Defence Corps marching as escort. On this occasion things had moved too quickly for it to be possible to mobilise the guards properly. How peaceable were the intentions of the demonstrators is proved by the fact related to me by the Chief of the Political Police, Hofrat Pollak, that at 8 a.m. Julius Deutsch, Commander-in-Chief of the Republican Defence Corps, 'phoned him that thousands of demonstrators were on the march to the city, that the Republican Defence Corps could only be partially mobilised and asking him to have a sufficient



police force on duty and visible to restrain any hotheads, but not to issue them arms, which might provoke the demonstrators. But by then the police reserves were scattered throughout Vienna and between the sheets after their long vigil. Only scanty forces were available, and the others had slowly to be aroused and collected by messengers on bicycles.

When I reached Parliament at about ten o'clock, the Ringstrasse was filled with thousands of workmen, men and women, marching in orderly procession. After I had watched them for about a quarter of an hour, I saw the procession stop, apparently unable to make headway. They carried banners protesting against the class justice of the Schattendorf verdict, but were perfectly good-tempered, as photos prove which I took from the steps of a tramcar showing them laughing and joking amongst themselves at the delay. Suddenly there came a sound of firing a few streets away, somewhere behind Parliament. At that distance the isolated shots sounded no more dangerous than those of popguns; they were the revolvers of the police. Almost simultaneously on the Schmerlingplatz, the square in front of the Palace of Justice, I saw the flash of sabres in the bright sunshine above the heads of the crowd and the cry arose "*Man schiesst auf uns*". It was the beginning of one of the most bloodthirsty twenty-four hours in the history of Vienna. The police had blundered badly and more than one high official lost his head. Chief among them was Hofrat Skubl, Commandant of the mounted police force of Vienna, who afterwards became Police President and Minister of Security under Schuschnigg, and for twelve brief hours remained a Minister in the sham Nazi "Cabinet" of Dr. Seyss-Inquart, which was formed on the night of March 11th, 1938, in order to destroy Austria's independence and hand the country over to Hitler. At the root of the trouble was the blunder of Police President Dr. Schober in allowing the police to disperse to their homes at 6 a.m. On the most normal days, when there was no question of a political demonstration, 150 men were always held ready for duty, guarding Parliament. On this day there were only sixty-seven men to guard both Parliament and the Palace of Justice. Their commandant made the serious blunder of barring the line of march to the hundreds of thousands of workers, instead of keeping them moving round the public buildings and so back towards the factory areas in the outer suburbs as the marchers



had planned. Immediately confusion was created in the ranks and the whole temper of the demonstrators changed. Whether the police drew their revolvers or the workers threw stones first, was never definitely settled and is not important. The vital point is that the nervousness of several police commandants with insufficient forces at their disposal turned a peaceful protest demonstration into bloody street-fighting. The worst thing of all was to give the order to a few dozen mounted police to charge these enormous crowds.

There is little of the "Blue Danube", "Kiss the Hand" and "I Have the Honour" Viennese about the workers of Vienna. During my twelve years' residence I came to know them as orderly, class-conscious, peaceable wage-earners, with a sense for democracy ineradicably rooted in their hearts. They lack the volatile temperament of the Viennese bourgeoisie. They are extremely slow to anger, patient and hard-working. But there is a fixed limit beyond which it is not safe to go with the proletariat of Vienna. If you do, you confront a solid mass imbued with a strong sense of comradeship and with something amounting almost to a contempt for their own lives—certainly fearlessness in the face of danger—when they feel that their whole class is being outraged. One of the things you have never been able to do to the Viennese workers is to set mounted police against them unless you do it in such force as to scatter them in the first ten minutes—and clear off their dead and wounded before too many of their comrades see them. This was just what the police commandant in a moment of panic forgot on July 15th. The feeble charge of the mounted police was resisted, and in a trice planks and cobblestones were seized from a neighbouring building under construction and barricades built up. Stones, chunks of wood and brickbats hurtled through the air. Men armed with planks and iron bars rushed at the mounted and foot police and started hamstringing their horses with knives. For two hours I was in the midst of the fight all round Parliament and on one occasion got a good photo of the business end of police revolvers, as the workers retreated behind me, hurling stones, and the police advanced towards me firing. I probably owed my life that day to hastily producing my camera as a sort of badge of neutrality. A reactionary Austrian colleague whom I ran across told me warningly that these "bloodthirsty Bolsheviks" would certainly murder me at sight if they thought

I was taking pictures, but I was able to reassure him that in a pause in the battle some of them had asked me to photograph them with their improvised weapons and roughly bandaged heads.

The mounted police were driven back to the Palace of Justice, which was defended from inside by police who eventually exhausted all their ammunition firing into the crowd. But before that happened wisps of smoke began to arise from the great building. The sight of their dead and wounded comrades and the thought of the Schattendorf acquittal had turned the peaceful protest demonstration into a raging mob, out for the blood of the police and to destroy the building they regarded as the centre of class justice. The plundering of a small gunsmith's shop had yielded a few weapons. Not many, as the final casualty list showed. But the Palace of Justice was set well ablaze and the fire brigade prevented from coming to the rescue until the chairman of the Socialist Party and Burgomaster of Vienna, Karl Seitz, and other Socialist leaders, came into the midst of the furious mob and mounted a fire-brigade ladder to make an appeal to reason. But by this time the flames had got beyond control and the building was lost. The heroes of the fire were the members of the Socialist Republican Defence Corps. They forced their way through the crowds into the burning building, where thirty police, their ammunition all gone, were faced with the alternative of burning to death or being torn limb from limb by the mob. The Defence Corps men took off their uniforms and civilian clothes, dressed the police in these and smuggled them out, themselves coming out half-dressed and being roughly handled by the mob, who doubted their identity. Twice the Socialist ambulance corps, at the request of the police outside, returned to the building to rescue wounded police. In the course of this and other gallant actions to rescue defenceless enemies, eleven Defence Corps men were killed, mostly by police who misunderstood their intentions.

The Police President urged Burgomaster Seitz to call out the troops to fire on the crowds, but met with a firm refusal. Thanks to the Burgomaster's intervention, fire brigades had at last been able to get to work, when suddenly the firing took on a less popgun-like note. The Police President had armed the police with rifles and carbines. Worst of all, many of the men were using what was virtually dum-dum ammunition—target ammuni-

tion, the casing of which stopped short at the nose, inflicting terrible wounds where the lead splashed. Subsequently I saw hundreds of clips of this ammunition piled up in the office of Julius Braunthal, editor of the Socialist *Kleines Blatt*, and obtained an admission from Hofrat Pollak, Head of the Political Police, that in the hurry such ammunition had been issued. The admission was only given after previous denials, when I insisted that I had seen it for myself. When in a subsequent article in the *Contemporary Review* I mentioned the use of this ammunition, the Socialist *Arbeiterzeitung* unfortunately discovered the reference and published it as part of its controversy with the police. The police issued a flat *démenti*, I contradicted their *démenti* in a letter to all Vienna papers, which only the Left papers published. Hofrat Pollak sent for me and after first trying to convince me that the use of such ammunition in street-fighting was really humane, because it had less penetrating power, expounded the strange theory that it was my duty as a journalist to let the police brand me as a liar, even if I had told the truth. "What harm could it do you in England, Mr. Gedye," he said, "if I denied—only in the Austrian Press—something you had written in England? But by denying my *démenti*, you put a senior police officer in a very awkward position." I was sorry to incommode the Head of the Political Police, who was a good fellow and remained my personal friend despite it, and I explained to him that we had not yet a "police state" in England, and that I had not been conditioned to realise that nothing must be said which might impair the sacrosanct character of a police official and his utterances.

The police had been inflamed during the day, deliberately or accidentally, by all kinds of atrocity stories. The cap and uniform jacket of a policeman were hung derisively on a lamp-post outside a small police station from which the police were driven out. In an hour all the police believed that a dozen policemen had been hanged there. Actually the men who stormed this police station searched, after politely asking for permission, the flat of an English lady I knew living just above. They found nobody and touched nothing, but asked if they could have a good wash in the kitchen because fighting was such dirty work! The police took a terrible toll of the civilian population that afternoon. They started firing indiscriminately, not only in the neighbourhood of the Ringstrasse but in many

other parts of the city, on any little crowds, mostly of the curious, which collected. Furnished with a police permit, I penetrated through the police cordon by the National Museum and tried to make my way to the Mariahilferstrasse, but bullets whined past so fast and the police were firing so wildly that I had to abandon the attempt. I returned to my flat to get off a second story for the *Daily Express*. The lift did not work and I had to climb up five storeys. The front-door bell was silent. The electric light failed to respond to the switch. Panic-stricken, I rushed at the telephone. Dis! The workers had replied to the blood-bath in the streets by the final weapon of the unarmed masses—the General Strike.

If proof were needed of the pacific character of the Socialists, here it was. In this case the Party leaders decided on the weapon of the general strike, not because they had no others, but because they declined the responsibility of issuing them to the masses even when the latter were being mercilessly butchered by an enraged police. Walled up in secret depots in the old arsenal and in the workers' model dwellings were several hundred thousand of rifles and thousands of machine-guns, as the confiscation of arms in later years and the fighting in February 1934 were to prove. Mingling with the little groups which gathered that evening just out of range of the police carbines I heard many times the complaint, "Why don't our leaders open the depots and give us arms to defend ourselves?" Probably the final overthrow of liberty in Austria and the destruction of its independence should be dated from July 15th, 1927. Certainly this was one of the four fateful days for Austrian liberties, the others being the suppression of Parliament by Dollfuss in March 1933, the two Twelfths of February—that of the Counter-Revolution of 1934, and that of the Berchtesgaden meeting of 1938 which through the German invasion and Nazi revolution brought the Schuschnigg regime to an end just one month later on March 11th, 1938. If the Austrian Socialist leaders were guilty of a tragic tactical error by not arming the workers in 1927, it was an error made, like its successors for which they were responsible, purely from motives of humanity, the desire to avoid bloodshed and the impossibility—in those days of comparative sanity—of crediting the lengths of brutality and contempt for legality to which the then only half-understood creed of Fascism would go.

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But there was no time for philosophical reflection on July 15th, 1927. I was confronted with the same dilemma as on many other days of similar dramatic happenings—whether to send an incomplete story and make sure of getting something over, or to wait for the full story and run a grave risk of being unable to put it on the wires. Acting on the principle that a poor story on the sub-editor's desk is better than a world sensation bottled up in the foreign correspondent's pocket, I got hold of a car and made a dash for the frontier. Dash is perhaps hardly the proper word for my progress through the streets of Vienna, with a halt every ten minutes to get through either a posse of heavily armed police in an ugly temper or of half-armed strike pickets, nervous and suspicious that every motor-car was in the service of their enemies. Outside Vienna we were able to speed up, and within a couple of hours were on Czechoslovak soil in Bratislava, that Mecca of Austrian political fugitives, and some sort of story was filed. On that day I chose the right way out of the dilemma. The following day I did the reverse. Sinclair Lewis and Dorothy Thompson had arrived from Berlin by air, and he offered and the *Daily Express* accepted a story of how the fighting in Vienna struck Sinclair Lewis. I knew it was my job to make a dash to Bratislava again at the earliest possible moment in view of the rush of stories which was to be anticipated, but let myself be persuaded to hang about while Dorothy Thompson completed her story, in order to go across the frontier in her super car. Our start was postponed again and again, and when we reached Bratislava post office I was already hopelessly late for the *Express*, which at that time went to Press very early. My last hopes of making the paper vanished when Dorothy Thompson, to my horror, took out of her bag a whole sheaf of cables, which she had obligingly brought over for various friends of hers among the foreign correspondents and handed them over to the telegraph clerk. There should be no room for chivalry and social courtesies in newspaper work, but I was not as experienced and as tough as I have become, and I allowed America's smartest woman journalist the privilege of her sex without a murmur; she was certainly quite unconscious of my sacrifice and agony. I got the murmur two days later, when the wires reopened, in the shape of a cable: "Your first day's story excellent but second day complete flop stop hopelessly late stop unused express".

The general strike was broken within three days. This was principally the work of the Heimwehr, and from then onwards until 1934 they became a growing threat to democratic liberties in Austria. The Schattendorf shooting, which caused the riots and the burning down of the Palace of Justice, was the fifth occasion within two years that Fascists had shot down Socialists and gone scot-free. Henceforth this freedom of the Right to shoot down workers of the Left became more or less of an unwritten law. The latter's increase in influence, won through increasing votes at elections for Parliament, municipalities and factory councils, was countered by the reactionaries by illegally arming an anti-democratic body and giving it the protection of police, army and organised class justice in the courts. It is easy to condemn the Austrian Socialist leaders, as the Communists did not hesitate to condemn them, as "Social Fascists" who did "lackey service" to capitalist reaction and betrayed the workers to the final disasters of 1934 and 1938. I would not acquit them altogether. But the Socialist leaders had to consider many circumstances. Even a successful revolution in Austria in defence of true Republican and Socialist principles would almost certainly have been countered by immediate invasion from Fascist Italy and semi-Fascist Hungary. So they buried the eighty-five civilian dead, seventy-five of them in graves of honour provided by the Socialist Municipality, while the police buried their fatal casualties, which totalled exactly four—in-disputable evidence of where the real guilt for the slaughter lay.

I have had to attend many funerals which made news, but I hope I shall never see anything as terrible as the mass funerals of these seventy-five Socialist victims of the Government of Monsignore Seipel the Priest-Prelate. The coffins lay on seventy-five tall catafalques at the gates of the Central Cemetery. After the fine funeral orations of Karl Seitz and other Socialist leaders, including working-men through whose simple sentences rang a moving sincerity of grief and a bitter determination to be revenged, came the successive removal of the coffins which were borne on the shoulders of working comrades along the formal avenues of cypresses to the huge plot where the graves of honour had been prepared. As the name of each dead soldier of Socialism was called out before the coffin was moved, the relatives came to claim their dead and accompany them to the last. These were the most terrible moments. Women flung themselves across the

coffin, embracing it and trying to delay the inevitable moment of farewell. Or a whole family would stand dry-eyed, raising their arms to give the clenched fist Socialist salute and cry " Freedom " or " Revenge ".

Monsignore Seipel was victorious, and utilised his victory to the utmost. The Government Press published the wildest and most distorted stories of a dangerous and well-planned Communist revolution which had aimed at the creation of a Soviet Austria, suppressed after desperate fighting. Despite the palpable untruth of this version in face of the many photographs showing the unarmed and perfectly orderly procession with its many women and children prior to the mounted-police provocation, the striking figures of the casualties and the indisputable fact of Socialist possession of huge quantities of arms which were not issued, the story was very generally accepted abroad.



### CHAPTER III

#### “ THE PRELATE WITHOUT MERCY ”

NO ONE SHOWED MORE SKILL IN PROPAGATING THE “ RED Plot ” lie than “ Autrichelieu ”, as his friends began to call Austria’s Richelieu, Monsignore Seipel. His name of *Der Keine Milde Prelate*—“ The Prelate Without Mercy ”—the Socialists gave him after a speech of his in Parliament in which he declared that there could be “ *keine Milde* ”—“ no mercy ”—for the “ criminals ” of July 15th. Seipel always struck me as a man born out of time and place. His overweening political ambitions, his rigid personal asceticism, his genius for cold-blooded, relentless hostility towards a weakened enemy, his sure touch for the right propaganda for the right person, his talent for intrigue and single-minded devotion to advancing the political interests of the Church, really seemed to belong to the era of great political cardinals in despotic empires, and to be thrown away in that of a little democratic Alpine republic struggling at home towards Socialism, and in foreign policy condemned practically to inaction by the ever-growing strength of reaction abroad. One of his great admirers, Dr. Martin Fuchs of the Austrian Foreign Office, once said to me that perhaps little Austria’s greatest misfortune was to have been endowed with two opposing political geniuses whose talents were so much too great for the tiny stage whereon they had to play their parts—Ignaz Seipel, the Papal Pronotary, and Otto Bauer, the brains of the Social-Democratic Party. Looking back, one sees how in 1938 Austria paid the penalty for the impress of clericalism and bigotry first given the country by Seipel and made indelible by Dollfuss and Schuschnigg, who both frequently proclaimed, and with justice, that they regarded themselves as the direct heirs of Seipel’s political heritage. I had often the privilege of talking with this great churchman, and got to know a good deal of his mental brilliance and surprising limitations—the limitations imposed on an amazingly



keen intellect by the blinkers of his faith. To this his mode of life contributed. Even at the height of his power, "Autriche-lieu" enjoyed nothing of the pomp and circumstance of a Richelieu. He walked with Princes and Premiers—but he ate, prayed and slept in no more than two little monastic rooms in the convent of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Throughout his years as Chancellor, Seipel let no political stress curb his religious duties. Regularly at 6 a.m. he said Mass in the convent chapel, and only after this turned to the morning papers over breakfast. He continued to act as the Superior of this congregation of nuns despite the demands of office, and lived during the summer months in their pleasant country convent on the outskirts of Vienna. At 8.30 he suspended religious functions to motor into Metternich's famous Chancellery on the Ballhausplatz. Hated with due cause by the Socialist workers of Vienna, he was badly wounded in 1922 while driving to the Chancellery by the half-crazy fanatic who fired a revolver-shot at him and on July 15th, 1927, had a narrow escape from being dragged from his car by the infuriated mob. Whenever possible Seipel took his meals—he was on a strict diabetical diet—in the convent.

Though not actually a member of the Society of Jesus, Seipel had all the characteristics popularly attributed to this political brain-centre of the Catholic Church. This was evident above all in Seipel's handling of the question of the Anschluss. Often though he referred to this in speeches, it was impossible to tie him down to a clear "yes" or "no" in any reference he made to the subject. At that time Germany was a democratic republic. Dr. Seipel's opponents, the great Social-Democratic Party, had union with the stronger republic on their programme, although they did not pursue it as a burning issue. The Party with whose aid Seipel kept the Socialists from power—the Pan-Germans, who were later to go over *en bloc* to the Nazis—made support of the Anschluss, of course, the principal issue of their policy. His own Clerical Party was divided. Probably Seipel was against *the* Anschluss but for *an* Anschluss. As we have already seen, he cherished dreams of a Germany split into its component Protestant and Catholic parts, with the Prussia which he hated left to its own devices, and the Catholics of Germany, Austria and the Succession States united in some kind of great Papal Fédération. Some of the Clericals shared his dream, others would have nothing whatever to do with

Germany, and a few would have supported unconditional Anschluss even with the Germany which included the Protestant States. The financial support which Seipel obtained from the League Powers for Austria was conditional on the way to the Anschluss being blocked. A speech of his in June 1928 exemplified his vulpine skill in inducing this hedgehog to uncoil to the satisfaction of all his friends without damaging himself. Friends of the Anschluss declared that Seipel was with them because in this speech he asserted that no solution of Austria's future problems would be acceptable “ unless the German Reich played its part therein ”. The adherents of a reconstructed Habsburg Monarchy which should bar the way to the Anschluss found Seipel on their side because in the same speech he expressed pleasure at the more favourable view taken by the Little Entente States of his plans for a preferential customs system between them and Austria.

One day I interviewed Seipel at the headquarters of the Austrian Industrialists' Association on the Schwarzenbergplatz and tried to tie down this spiritual father of the illegal Heimwehr-Fascist movement on the subject of their illegal arms. He was at great pains to persuade me that there was nothing at all illegal about the movement. It was just a number of groups of patriotic ex-soldiers, the counterpart of the British Legion, who liked to have an occasional parade, to wear their old uniforms and their old war-medals. I was really doing a great deal of harm to Austria by writing in foreign newspapers as though these quiet veterans of the Great War could ever do anything counter-revolutionary. Men of the world like Monsignore Seipel and G. E. R. Gedye—a benign and statesman-like smile seemed to assure me that alone we two wise persons among a horde of excitable chatterboxes could really estimate political questions at their true weight—could well afford to overlook the follies of schoolboys like Starhemberg or old martinets like Major Fey. Acknowledging *en passant* the flattering elevation of myself to the pedestal of Autrichelieu, I reminded the Chancellor that the British Legion wore the uniforms of the regular army on the very rare occasions that they wore uniforms at all, that most of the Heimwehr had seen no war service and had no medals to wear, and that the British Legion did not insist on provocative marches through “ Red ” workers' areas. Nor had its members made themselves notorious

by shooting down Socialist demonstrators, their leaders had never proclaimed that the heads of Ramsay MacDonald and "Uncle Arthur"—not even that of Mr. Saklatvala—should "roll in the sand", and above all, they had no secret stores of arms at the illegal acquisition of which Mr. Baldwin had winked year after year. "But neither have the Heimwehr", the great man assured me blandly, with another smile, this time a little pitying that my ignorance as a foreigner could have betrayed me into taking such café-house gossip seriously. "The Heimwehr have no arms, and therefore they could never carry through any counter-revolution." I stared at Monsignore Seipel incredulously, but the cold grey eyes behind the gold-rimmed spectacles returned my scrutiny impassively, and the thin lips continued to smile with friendliness and that slight note of pity and ineffable patience with the well-meaning but slightly muddle-headed foreigner. "But Fey and Starhemberg openly boast in their speeches of the arms of the Heimwehr, especially of the Vienna Heimwehr," I told him.

"That is just boasting, nothing more," he replied. "In Tyrol, of course, there exists the traditional right for all good citizens to keep their arms at home, rather like the Swiss militia do, and of course all good citizens are in the Heimwehr. As for the Vienna Heimwehr, they have no arms in their possession. The arms of which they talk are all in the hands of the Vienna police."

This was news, and I published it in the interview. It was just the admission that the Socialists required. So after all the police were hand in glove with the counter-revolutionary conspirators. Police President Schober's professions of democracy, constitutionalism and impartial loyalty towards the workers and the great Socialist Party were mere eyewash. Here was the highest authority of all, Ignaz Seipel himself, giving the lie to all Schober's professions; his police were storing arms for the Vienna Heimwehr to be issued to them when the day should dawn to sweep the "Reds" into oblivion. Schober angrily gave the lie direct to Seipel; it was quite untrue, he said, that the police had any arms of the Heimwehr—all the arms in the police stores were their own. Seipel got out of the difficulty quite easily. Of course, he said, he accepted the word of Schober. Obviously his statement was correct—obviously the police had not got the arms of the Vienna Heimwehr—had merely their own reserves. As for Mr. Gedyé, he too was an

honourable man—a most honourable man. In an unfamiliar language, it was quite easy for a little mistake to arise. Here-upon the *Reichspost*, Seipel's own organ, and the *Dötz*—the “ near-Nazi ” *Deutsch-Oesterreichische Tageszeitung*, called me a liar. I had some fun in forcing them to print one of those comic denials which, under the old Austrian press law, newspapers were obliged to publish if sent in by the aggrieved party. They had to appear on the same page and in the same type as the original attack, and great ingenuity was exercised in complying with the letter of the law, yet smothering the denial in other matter so that no one should be tempted to read it. They had to take this form :

“ In your issue of so and so you write : ‘ G. E. R. Gedye is a notorious liar, an incompetent journalist and in the pay of Moscow ! ’

“ This is untrue. True is much more, that G. E. R. Gedye is not a notorious liar but is world-famed for his astounding devotion to truth. It is untrue that he is an incompetent journalist. True is much more, that he is a highly competent newspaper man from every point of view. It is untrue that he is in the pay of Moscow. True is much more, that he is in the pay of his own newspaper, that he has never even seen a cent of Red Gold and has therefore had no opportunity of accepting it.

“ Later you write, ‘ He deliberately misrepresented the Chancellor, Monsignore Seipel ’. This is untrue. True is much more, that he never misrepresented the Chancellor Monsignore Seipel at all, therefore certainly not deliberately, but on the other hand gave a reproduction of the words of the Chancellor Monsignore Seipel which are a shining example of accuracy for all time.”

Your game was to make the denial as wordy as the law allowed. The paper would print your denial in accordance with the law, adding the vital comment : “ Our readers will know what to think of this foolish denial by G. E. R. Gedye of our perfectly justified statements about the well-known facts of his lying misrepresentation of the Chancellor and wallowing in Bolshevist money. But until this asinine law is changed we cannot prevent such a scoundrel from denying our well-founded statements of fact at the cost of our limited supplies of news-print.” With that, honour was satisfied. Or not. Of course, you could bat the shuttlecock back across the net if you liked in the form of another denial, which would be printed with an

even more vicious sting in the tail. Financial redress for the foulest slanders or real penalty for their authors there was none. I remember the *Dötz* one day publishing a statement that Isaac Abrahams had raped two of his girl workers during the lunch hour. An indignant denial was sent in and duly published, with the comment, "Our readers will know what to think of the denial of this notorious Jewish violator of employees, will understand that there is not a word of truth in it, and that everything we asserted about him was correct". In my case my lawyer made a technical mistake in the denial he submitted, and it was not printed until we got the two papers into court, and demanded to have Seipel and Schober called as witnesses. Thereupon judgment was hurriedly given in my favour, and the denials appeared with the usual savage comment. If honour was not satisfied, Seipel was. For at that moment a *rapprochement* at his expense was well on the way between his rival Schober and his bitter foes, the Socialists. The statement about the Heimwehr arms put a stop to that pretty quickly. He deliberately flew the kite, through me, and I could not even complain. For he never denied the complete accuracy of my quotation. He never said that I had misunderstood him. He said merely that "a foreigner" might well make a mistake, an assertion which nobody could deny, never that I had done so. Having ruined Schober's game with the Socialists, he assured him of his belief in his honour. He incidentally reminded the Heimwehr that he was their master. And to me he gave a satisfactorily sensational statement.

Seipel, Schober, the Socialists, the Heimwehr and I had all spoken the truth—in a way, and each of us knew in what way. For the Heimwehr had arms in abundance—in the hands of the Vienna police, who in February 1934 issued them for use against the workers.

After Seipel had broken the general strike of the Socialists in July 1927, mainly by employing the Heimwehr as armed black-legs, reaction was definitely in the saddle in Austria, although its seat was never an easy one. Seipel throughout the ensuing years drove his democratic opponents to frenzy by the Jesuitical skill with which he blandly denied—and defeated all efforts to bring home to him—responsibility for the arming, growth and excesses of this movement which openly professed the destruction of the Republic as its aim. Secretly he supported all its activities, even to the extent of seeing that ample opportunity

was furnished for the Heimwehr to “ steal ” surplus arms and ammunition from the regular army. At first the Socialists countered by increasing the strength of the Republican Defence Corps. But Herr Vaugoin, Dr. Seipel’s Minister of War, did much to paralyse the efficiency of this body by “ discovering ” at intervals and seizing their arms depots, thus breaking the gentlemen’s agreement under which he and the Socialists had jointly hidden these arms from the Inter-Allied Disarmament Commission. But when the Socialists retaliated by denouncing in their turn to the police the secret Heimwehr depots of which they also were aware, the authorities not only saw to it that the Heimwehr moved them in good time to a new “ cache ”, but allowed the confiscated Republican arms to fall into the hands of the enemies of the Republic.

Fascist tactics are pretty much the same, whether fathered by Benito Mussolini, Adolf Hitler, Ernst Rüdiger von Starhemberg or Konrad Henlein. Their first objective is the provocation of the workers and others who reject their policies to a conflict which is then labelled “ a Bolshevist revolt ” and made an excuse for further anti-democratic illegalities. In October 1928 the Heimwehr announced that they would bring 30,000 of their irregulars into the strongly Socialist city of Wiener Neustadt and march them through the streets. Precisely the same tactics were pursued Sunday after Sunday in Neukölln and other Berlin working-class suburbs by Hitler’s Nazis, and by Henlein’s Sudeten German Party in partially Czech or Socialist areas of Czechoslovakia, as they are being pursued in the East End of London to-day. If the invasion of uninvited political opponents fails to produce the desired clash, at least it serves to discourage the democratic masses and discredit their leaders by demonstrating their powerlessness to protect their ideals from strangers to the district who receive the support of the State executive in publicly insulting such ideals. This in Fascist phraseology is known as “ securing the freedom of the streets ”.

“ *Die Strasse frei den braunen Bataillonen—  
Die Strasse frei dem Sturmabteilungsmann.* ”

I still hear the tramp of the jackboots of the Viennese Nazis as they swung down the Kärntnerstrasse and the Graben last March singing triumphantly this demand for “ freedom ” which is part of the Horst Wessel song—for the freedom which had



driven from the streets of Vienna everyone who claimed the right to individual judgment, everyone unable to accept their own blind submission to the god-like qualities of Adolf Hitler. They were the verses which established full freedom for the Nazis to arrest, plunder, torture and murder all those whose views or race they disliked. To this demand for Fascist "freedom" in Wiener Neustadt the Socialists replied, first by organising a counter-march of the Wiener Neustadt workers and then by the offer to Dr. Seipel that if he would forbid the provocative invasion by the Heimwehr they would abandon their own plans for a demonstration. The prelate-politician refused, and special correspondents gathered from all parts of Europe to see the anticipated bloodshed. This was prevented at great cost to the impoverished Republic by the moving up of strong military forces which split the city of Wiener Neustadt into a Red and a Black half.

Again and again in the ensuing years the Socialists offered both to Seipel and to his successor Dollfuss to disarm and disband the Republican Defence Corps if the Government would see that the Fascists did the same. Since the aim of the Government was the destruction of the democratic Republic by means of the Heimwehr despite the fact that it would involve a clash with the Republicans, the offer was naturally refused on every occasion. A long struggle for positions ensued, but the Republicans were fighting with their hands tied behind their backs by the Government. The Heimwehr imported not only arms but a Prussian Putsch expert, Major Waldemar Pabst, a notorious member of the German terrorist secret societies which had long been fighting the democratic constitution in Germany. Major Emil Fey, a narrow-minded, courageous and brutal ex-soldier of the "Black-and-Tan" type, organised gangs of Vienna toughs and put them into grey uniforms to destroy the work of Karl Seitz and the Socialists whose great blocks of model homes for the workers, used as a pattern by Social reformers of Europe and America, were a red rag to the bull of Austrian reaction. Prince Ernst Rüdiger von Starhemberg, owner of thirteen castles and a list of debts as long as your arm, took a little time off flirtation and Vienna night-life to raise his own irregulars in Upper Austria for that "march on Vienna" which he constantly declared would cause Socialist "heads to roll in the sand". In Styria a disgruntled country lawyer, Dr. Walter Pfriemer, raised more irregulars for the march on Vienna, with a private reservation

that if he arrived there first, not only Socialist but also Clerical heads should roll in the sand to pave the way for a Nazi dictatorship. The black-bearded Dr. Steidle played a similar game in Tyrol.

From the coffers of the Alpine Montan, the Boehler Werke and other big industrial concerns, many of them controlled by Reichs-German capital and from banks like the Boden-Credit-Anstalt, often controlled by Jewish capital, money poured in an incongruous stream into the insatiable vaults of the Heimwehr. How much Nazi money actually financed anti-Nazi Heimwehr arms, what sums were contributed by wealthy Jews to check the advance of the Nazis or to reverse the improvements in the workers' lot which poor Jewish intellectuals and Jewish workers had played so large a part in effecting, will never be established. It was good form to join the Heimwehr, it was fashionable to contribute to their funds, it was ill-bred and ill-advised to refuse to do so. Monsignore Seipel and after him the pious Engelbert Dollfuss had conferred their blessing on these preparations for shedding the blood of the masses and taking such power as they had out of their hands. Dr. Schober, Police President of Vienna, and at one time Chancellor, played a dubious rôle.

The tree of reaction bore premature fruit more than once before the full harvest was reaped in February 1934. In 1929, at St. Lorenzen in Styria, armed Heimwehr attacked a Socialist demonstration and there were killed and wounded. The Government refused to confiscate the Heimwehr arms. The Austrian Governments after the death of Seipel alternated between those which favoured the Clerico-Fascist and the Nazi brands of reaction. Schober succeeded Seipel at Easter 1929. Professing loyalty to the Constitution, he encouraged at the same time the hopes of both reactionary camps, and while occasionally flirting with them, never forgave the Social Democrats for their attacks on him as largely responsible for the bloodshed of July 1927. The Heimwehr had to thank the Schober Government for big subventions. The reactionary bishop of Seckau, Dr. Pawlikowski, urged Schober to carry through a *coup d'état* against the workers; he was unsuccessful then, but had his way in 1934 with Dollfuss. Under Schober occurred the collapse of the Boden-Credit-Anstalt, which proved the starting-point of the world credit crisis, brought about largely by its corrupt financing of Clerical Party banks and the Heim-



wehr. The Government forced Rothschild's Bank, the Credit-Anstalt, to take over the derelict Boden-Credit, and this a few years later led to the collapse of the Credit-Anstalt itself. Schober himself was a Pan-German, and had he lived would have become a prominent Nazi. He fell over resistance to the demand of the Minister of War, Vaugoin, for a big job for the Heimwehr leader Strafella, whose conduct the courts had stigmatised as "unclean and incorrect". Vaugoin succeeded him and Strafella got the promised job. Vaugoin, a Clerical reactionary, took for the first time two Heimwehr Fascists into his Cabinet—Prince Starhemberg and Dr. Hueber. To-day the ways of these two enemies of liberty have parted. Hueber, thanks to his marriage with General Goering's sister, has a good post in the puppet administration of Nazi Austria, which has exiled his former colleague Starhemberg and confiscated his thirteen castles.

At the same time the illegitimate son of two simple lower Austrian peasants was rewarded for his devotion to Clerical reaction by being appointed President of the Austrian Federal Railways. His name was Dr. Engelbert Dollfuss. His first act was to appoint Vaugoin's protégé, Strafella, to the promised post of Director-General. Vaugoin punished Schober by replacing him in the police presidency by the Nazi Dr. Franz Brandl while Schober was absent.

The Vaugoin Government openly prepared for the Clerico-Fascist counter-revolution. An era of oppression of the democratic Press set in. The hot-headed Starhemberg was given the key post of Minister of the Interior with control of the police. He boasted in speeches that the forthcoming elections would be valueless, as the Heimwehr would never surrender the power they had secured. Pabst, the Putsch expert, was recalled from the exile to which Schober had sent him, and Starhemberg turned the police on to every kind of provocative action against the Socialists, raiding their clubs and headquarters week after week. A Putsch with a march on Vienna was fixed for November 18th, in which the Legitimists were to have assisted the Heimwehr. But the plans became known too soon and the Powers issued a warning which Vaugoin and Starhemberg were afraid to disregard. The Vaugoin-Starhemberg Cabinet fell after the elections in November 1930, when the Heimwehr, despite terrorism, secured only eight seats, and Schober formed another government with the Governor of Vorarlberg, Dr. Ender. The

Heimwehr went into opposition and their leader Starhemberg devoted his first and last parliamentary speech to attacking Schober for accepting the French Legion of Honour. The Nazis for the first time made a serious effort to get into Parliament at these November 1930 elections. They failed to secure a single mandate. These were the last elections which Austria was to know. Of the 165 mandates the Social-Democrats secured 72, the Clericals 66, the “ Schober bloc ” (Agrarians and Pan-Germans) 19, and the Heimwehr 8. But the largest party was permanently kept out of power by a coalition of ill-assorted enemies. A definite move towards the Anschluss was taken when Dr. Schober and the German Foreign Minister Curtius startled the world by announcing on March 20th, 1931, that a customs union would be formed between Austria and Germany. Britain, France, Italy and the Little Entente declared that the proposal was a violation of the peace treaty, the Hague Court upheld them and the scheme was dropped.

The following summer there was an abortive Heimwehr Putsch under the Buresch Cabinet, which succeeded Schober-Ender. On September 13th, 1931, the Styrian Heimwehr drew the arms which the authorities had long allowed them to collect in depots, seized public buildings and issued a proclamation signed by Pfriemer, who declared that he had received “ a call ” to make himself Austrian dictator. He called on all reactionary bodies to take up arms against the State, established martial law and obligingly released the army and police from their oath of loyalty and “ accepted ” their oath to himself. The Government would probably have tolerated this move but for two things. First, Prince Starhemberg refused to play, out of personal jealousy of Pfriemer, and secondly Koloman Wallisch, Socialist Mayor of Bruck-an-der-Mur, took a hand in the game without being invited. He called out the workers, who obeyed the summons and offered resistance until the Government decided to send troops. Several workers were murdered by the Fascist revolutionaries, but the same evening the revolt was at an end. Pfriemer was allowed to escape abroad, and continued to plot against the Republic. Starhemberg was arrested in one of his castles and later released. The Heimwehr were allowed to retain their illegal arms depots and the evidence produced by the Socialists of the complicity of State employees in the plot was brushed aside. The counter-revolution marched on despite the momentary check.

## CHAPTER IV

### FASCISM SOWS THE WIND

ALTHOUGH JULY 1927 SAW THE FIRST DEFEAT OF THE democratic and Republican masses by the reactionaries when the Heimwehr—through blackleg labour backed by the threat of an armed march on Vienna—broke the general strike, it was nearly seven years before reaction was able to strike the last brutal blow. The impartial historian, while recording and condemning the many mistakes of the Austrian Social-Democratic leaders, will not forget that from 1927 to 1934 they doggedly fought a losing battle with one hand tied behind their backs by successive Chancellors who robbed them step by step of the chances of defending Parliament, democracy and the impressive reforms of the Vienna Socialist municipality against the gathering hordes of their enemies. Year by year the strength of the Heimwehr increased until Engelbert Dollfuss gave the signal for Fey and Starhemberg to strike the final blow in February 1934. But in between, Socialism fought many a successful delaying action against the various types of Austrian reactionaries who had sworn to destroy by bloodshed what was too firmly established to be vulnerable by the ballot box. To consider this period simply as one of steady growth of the Heimwehr involves misconception of the heterogeneous rival forces sometimes fighting side by side, sometimes against one another for leadership and permanently united by one thing only—common hatred of the power of the masses of wage-earners in the State. Towards the end this resolved itself into a struggle between Clericalism backed by Italian Fascism, and Nazism backed by the power of the Third Reich; Clericalism and Italian influences gained the upper hand, and when they felt strong enough, destroyed the Republic and the power of the workers, thereby weakening themselves to such an extent that the final triumph of the rival brand of Fascism from the north was merely a question of time.

But it was several years before the situation had so far

clarified itself. At first the forces of reaction resembled much more a pack of hungry and quarrelsome wolves than an army with a definite objective. The Styrian Heimwehr of Dr. Pfriemer alone marched under three banners—that of the green-white colours of Styrian reaction, black-white-red of German Imperialism and the swastika of National Socialism. Steidle, the original Heimwehr leader, who was chiefly responsible for the defeat of the workers in July 1927, was thrust into the background by Pfriemer until the two compromised on dual leadership. Neither of these two eager prophets of civil war had served in the front line against their country's enemies between 1914 and 1918, which of course did not prevent them from being the greatest of fire-eaters; Steidle stood for Clericalism within the Heimwehr and Pfriemer for Nazism. The terror expert, the German Waldemar Pabst, did a great deal to organise and discipline the heterogeneous forces of reaction. Ex-Imperial officers, dreaming of restoring the golden days of privilege and the Habsburgs, flung themselves enthusiastically into the Heimwehr movement. The industrialists gave money lavishly for the purchase of machine-guns and rifles with which to put their workers in their place. The Bankers' Association, as the Austrian pro-Nazi Winkler, himself a strong Heimwehr supporter and initiated into all its secrets, states, subscribed 25,000 schilling monthly to the Heimwehr through Chancellor Schober during 1929 and 1930. Year after year this sort of thing went on—successive Chancellors arming and supporting these preparations for civil war in defiance of the common law and the constitution of their own country as well as of all its international obligations. Here and there the Entente Powers made a half-hearted protest, but their Governments, too, were never prepared to say much against a movement which tended to reduce the power of the workers. Year after year the great employers terrorised those dependent on them for their daily bread into joining this movement, the only object of which was the formation of an army to shoot down their fellows standing under the banners of democracy and socialism. "Red Propaganda!" I can hear Colonel Blimp snorting, as he turns the pages of this book, or hurls it into the farthest corner of the smoking-room. No, Colonel—restrain your passion a moment while I read you a quotation from reactionary-Nazi Dr. Winkler, as good a Blimp as you yourself:

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“The industrial and capitalist body of employers openly sympathised with the Heimwehr. They gave the movement financial support. Through their works-manager they put strong pressure on their workers in the factories to join the Heimwehr. In many concerns, particularly in heavy industry, the workmen were militarised into the Heimwehr under the command of the works engineers. The arming of this force continued uninterruptedly. The storm companies received steel helmets, machine-gun detachments were equipped with arms. As its military value increased the Heimwehr army became an ever greater danger for the political parties.”

In Upper Austria Prince Starhemberg joined in the race to be first at the throat of the workers by equipping his own Jaeger battalion and fought hard to secure the leadership of the whole movement. Political Catholicism gave its blessing and full support to these preparations for mass murder, and Monsignore Seipel was regarded as the patron saint of the movement. Gregor Strasser, then an orthodox Nazi and close friend of Hitler (later murdered in the June 1934 purge), came to Vienna in 1930 to negotiate for a common Heimwehr-Nazi front, the idea of which Starhemberg approved. In the spring of 1930 Benito Mussolini, unencumbered by his declaration that “Fascism is not an article of export”, began to supply money for the arming of reaction in Austria. Putsch expert Pabst spent a fortnight’s holiday in Italy in March 1930. In April Dr. Steidle went in search of sunshine to Palermo and returned with machine-guns and lire. Not all the money received by the Heimwehr was expended on arms, ammunition and equipment; there were substantial rake-offs for some of the leaders, which called forth bitter recriminations from those who had been less fortunate. The pan-German, Nazi wing—to which in 1930 Starhemberg belonged—objected to the tie-up with Italy. In September 1930 Starhemberg demanded the resignation of Steidle from the leadership on the grounds of the latter’s political and financial obligations to Italy. On May 18th, 1930, Steidle proclaimed a full Fascist programme of the Heimwehr at Korneuburg, causing its members there to take the so-called Korneuburger Oath. It ran :

“We grasp at the power over the State. We reject democracy and Parliament. We stand for the principles of the Leadership State. Education must be withdrawn from the influence of

the Church and placed under secular control. The Church itself must be under the supervision of the State."

Thus the former Clerical, Steidle, showed his conversion to what were then the principles of Italian Fascism *vis-à-vis* the Vatican.

Beside this Korneuburger Oath, with its full confession of faith in Fascism and violence, may be set the famous Linzer Programme of Dr. Otto Bauer. On a hundred occasions the Fascists made this their excuse for the baseless allegation that the Austrian Social-Democrats were in reality revolutionary communists. "In the Linzer Programme the Red leader Otto Bauer openly declared that the aim of himself and his Austro-Bolshevists, miscalled Social-Democrats, was violent revolution and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat." Twice I heard this phrase repeated unblushingly to me in exactly the same words by the hard-bitten, stolid and stupid leader of the Vienna Heimwehr, Major Emil Fey, Knight of the Order of Maria Theresa. On the first occasion he was the guest of honour at one of our Anglo-American Press Association luncheons in the Blue Room of the Hotel Imperial. Like most of our distinguished guests, he paid honourably for his lunch with a speech and delivered himself of his regular piece on the "Vienna Reds". Inevitably this notorious phrase formed the backbone of his charges. The second time I heard it from his lips was on a Sunday morning—February 18th, 1934, in the Heimwehr headquarters in Herrengasse No. 7. Out on the periphery of the city a thousand workers' homes showed gaping wounds inflicted by artillery, howitzer and machine-gun fire during the preceding week. Hundreds of workers were dead, many still unburied after laying down their lives in defence of the democratic constitution and Socialist achievement against Fascist aggression. Thousands were lying wounded, hiding in the sewers of the city, on the run—trying to escape through woods and mountain passes across the frontiers or already in exile. In the prisons the rubber truncheons of the triumphant Heimwehr and the hangman's noose were already at work. But for the International and Austrian reactionary Press there were sandwiches and sherry in plenty put out on a long table in a big room at Herrengasse 7. Not all of us felt inclined for sherry and sandwiches—from the Heimwehr—that morning. But as good newspaper men we dutifully recorded the apologia

of Major Fey for the events of the preceding week. I met Major Fey only once again, long after his fall from favour, when he again invited the Press, this time to the Industrialists' Club on the Schwarzenbergplatz, to take an aperitif and sandwiches with him. Time dulls memories. The morning was hot, and on this occasion I was among those who drank an aperitif while Major Fey expounded his hopes of staging a come-back at the side of Schuschnigg to overthrow his erstwhile comrade in arms, Prince Starhemberg. I visited Herren-gasse 7 on only one subsequent occasion, in March 1938, when I was summoned there by the Gestapo a week before my expulsion from Austria. And a week before that I had sent my colleague to stand by the door of Fey's residence and watch three metal tubes being carried down the stairs and pushed into the appropriate receptacles in a motor van at the door en route for the Anatomical Institute. The tubes contained the bodies of Major Fey, his wife and son. They said that this cold-blooded, insensitive and absolutely fearless man had inexplicably lost his nerve, and although left quite unmolested, had murdered his wife and son and then killed himself. It seemed curious, for there was politically nothing against the son, and he was just the type whom the Nazis were busily recruiting for their triumphant storm-troopers. The Viennese said that Major Fey was so determined to commit suicide that he shot himself in twenty-three places. I only know that a colleague of mine, living in the neighbourhood, was called up by an intimate of Herr von Papen and Gestapo agent on that night before the fatal shots were fired and urged to keep his wife at home that evening or, if that were impossible, to make sure that she went nowhere near that part of the Reisnerstrasse where Major Fey lived.

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The Fascist leader's phrase which I have quoted, alleging that the Linzer Programme was one for revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, was as impudent a lie as Fascists anywhere have ever put forth, but in using it Major Fey only acted on the established Fascist principle which Nazism has carried to the farthest limits, that the more outrageous the untruth and the louder and more often it is blared forth in mass assemblies over the ether or through a gramophone press, the more certain it is of acceptance. Here is what Bauer did say on October 31st, 1926, at Linz in Upper Austria.



“ The Austrian workers established the democratic republic and forced the bourgeoisie to accept it. We are going to use this democratic republic in order to secure power by democratic means and spiritual weapons. If the bourgeoisie dares, it will try to overthrow democracy and establish a Fascist dictatorship. It will not dare to attack democracy so long as the police and the gendarmerie are not on the side of the Fascists and Monarchists. But the bourgeoisie may succeed in transferring the struggle to another battle-field than that of democracy. Only if we have to defend democracy against the counter-revolution would we be left with no other choice than to fight with violent means. Violence in our programme has only a defensive rôle. By violence we mean civil war. We know that the Fascist danger may confront us with the choice of defending ourselves by force of arms or surrendering. Therefore we say : ‘ If we are attacked you will find us armed, and ready for self-defence if driven to it ’ .”

This is the sole basis for the oft-repeated charge that the Austrian Social-Democrats in the Linzer Programme made violence and Communist dictatorship part of their programme. How often in later years did the Clerical *Reichspost* make this charge, yet the day after Bauer’s speech, the *Reichspost* wrote that he “ rejected terror and violence as a means for securing power in the State”. As for Bauer’s “ bolshevism ”, one of the earliest stories which I remember my first preceptor in Vienna, our well-beloved Owen D. Phillpotts, then Commercial Attaché at the British Legation, telling me on my arrival was how Bauer had stumped the country in 1919 to prevent the workers from following the lead of Bela Kun in Hungary and going over to Communism. And even in exile, Bauer continued to polemise—strangely enough, in view of intermediate events—against Moscow right up to his death in July 1938.

The Korneuburger Programme of 1930 proved the signal for a series of bloody week-ends. In order not to damage the receipts from foreign tourist traffic on which it depended for so much of the national revenue, the Austrian Government adopted the ingenious plan of establishing a “ close season ” for the Social-Democrats during the spring and summer months, when all parades and demonstrations by the Fascists and other political bodies were prohibited. This had the additional advantage of enabling the peasants to till the fields and get in

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the harvest before they were put into Heimwehr uniform and given rifles and machine-guns to terrorise the workers of the towns. The conflict of St. Lorenzen in Styria came even earlier, in 1929, when, in an attempt at a Putsch which never came off, Dr. Pfriemer mobilised the Upper Styrian Heimwehr under Rauter and other sub-leaders on the Stub-Alpe. The Heimwehr (later Nazi) leaders Rauter and Kammerhofer marched on St. Lorenzen with 2000 men to attack a parade of the Republican Defence Corps under the Mayor of Bruck-an-der-Mur, Koloman Wallisch. For some reason Pfriemer changed his plans and instead of marching, took the train to Vienna with Steidle and Dr. Rintelen, but a number of Socialist dead and 150 wounded were left in the streets of St. Lorenzen.

I have already referred to the unsuccessful Pfriemer Putsch in September 1931, in which, amongst others, the subsequent Foreign Minister of Dollfuss and Schuschnigg, the Heimwehr Baron Berger-Waldenegg was concerned. The news broke on a Sunday morning. I never saw a revolution under more comfortable circumstances. The Federal Railways' Southern Express to Trieste left the Südbahnhof at eight, and the same express in the other direction reached Vienna South station at about ten at night, just in time to telephone through a late story. Using the "Putsch Express" each way, I was able to write up the background over breakfast and early lunch on the train, see the Austrian Federal Army obligingly standing by while the discomfited Heimwehr put back their arms in depots ready to fight another day, note the devastation in the blood-stained Workers' Club at Kapfenberg wrought by Heimwehr machine-gun fire and finish my story over dinner on the return Putsch Special. I also managed to have a talk with Koloman Wallisch, the real hero of the day, who had forced the Government to suppress—if one can use the word of such polite proceedings—the Putsch, or face an armed conflict with working-class defenders of the constitution. I saw Wallisch in his little town hall in Bruck, where he was already being harassed by police as though he and not Dr. Pfriemer were the criminal revolutionary leader. He struck me as an absolutely realistic, fearless and class-conscious workers' leader—not a man to disturb the peace, but one who would never yield to violence an inch of the workers' rights and would unhesitatingly and at all times meet force with force. Therefore Dollfuss hanged him in 1934.

After Pfriemer's flight Starhemberg again took over the leadership of the Heimwehr, and his rivals, Fey and Steidle, were persuaded to support him. Starhemberg meantime had got into serious financial difficulties, only partly due to his expenditure on arming his own Heimwehr. Despite his previous attacks on Steidle for accepting money from Italy, he now adopted the same course himself. The Nazi influence in the Heimwehr waned and that of Italian Fascism and Austrian Clericalism began to wax. The rabid Nazi Theodor Habicht—a Reichs German to whom Hitler had given the leadership of the Austrian Nazis—fought against this development in negotiations with the Heimwehr and refused to support their September Putsch. In November Starhemberg declined to make a fighting alliance with the Nazis, but offered them a pact of mutual non-aggression. In the same month at a meeting of Heimwehr leaders in the Hotel Wiesler in Graz, Starhemberg bound himself by word of honour to support the Anschluss with Germany and to attack the Legitimists, telling his hearers that he was preparing with a number of army generals a military putsch to establish an anti-clerical, fascist dictatorship. The Styrian Heimwehr leader Rauter declared openly that Starhemberg's word was worth nothing. At the end of the year the Nazis broke off their alliance with the Styrian Heimwehr. This alliance was not renewed until on the 18th of April 1933 a secret agreement was signed between Habicht, Kammerhofer and Rauter, in which the Styrian Heimwehr acknowledged the leadership of Adolf Hitler.

Prince Ernst Rüdiger von Starhemberg was able to wear by turns the colours of every political movement (except the democratic) because politics were for him no more than a change from the serious business of life of keeping himself amused. What "going on the binge" is to the type of alcoholic that the Austrians call a *Quartalsaenger* were politics to Starhemberg. At recurrent intervals he seemed to be seized with an irresistible craving to appear in the political limelight and indulge in political intrigue. Aristocratic, good-looking and endowed with an unfair share of sex-appeal, far more intelligent than his birth and upbringing led people to expect, with a romantic and adventurous background from the days when as a mere boy he got himself mixed up in Adolf Hitler's "Beer-house Putsch" of 1923 and challenged death light-heartedly

against the ill-armed proletariat with the reactionary Prussian Freikorps, it was an easy matter for the young prince to become the idol of the young Austrian Fascists. Suffering from chronic impecuniosity which led him, the aristocratic Anti-Semite, into all kinds of curious relationships with Jewish moneylenders, it may be justly assumed that Starhemberg was no more indifferent to the prospects of garnering the spoils of office than many humbler Fascist conspirators. Unquestionably deeply imbued with what is called patriotism, he only wavered back and forth in alternate devotion to the Austrian and the German brand.

Starhemberg looks well in any uniform. When he entered Graz on November 12th, 1929, at the head of his own Jaeger battalions to join a great Heimwehr parade, he became at one stroke the darling of the young Fascist students of both sexes. He has an easy manner (due to an innate consciousness of his own ineffable superiority to everyone he has ever met, not excepting the whole House of Habsburg) with everyone, aristocrat, official, peasant and worker, who is prepared to take him at his own very high valuation. Democrats, "marxists", parliamentarians and socialists are, of course, the lesser breeds without the law, to be converted by fire and sword and then (reasonably well) kept in their place, or utterly rooted out. Withal he is a likeable personality who would have done little harm and come to none on polo-ground, race-track or night-bar, had he been kept away from his great vice, politics. In 1934 he, too, was a guest of our Anglo-American Press Association, and paid for his lunch in a speech in which he talked in what sounded like genuine terms of respect for the rank and file of the workers whose lives and liberties he and his Heimwehr had destroyed. Of course he had constantly in his mouth the Nazi-Fascist cliché of "Jewish-Marxist betrayers of the workers" applied to the intellectual leaders who, in Parliament with their brains and at the barricades with rifles in their hands, had opposed the progress of reaction. Here are a few quotations from the variegated political album of Starhemberg's speeches:

"The object of our movement is to create a people's State in which every *Volksgenosse* will have the right to work and bread. By a *Volksgenosse* I mean only one inspired by the race instinct of the German in whose veins German blood flows. In 'the people' I do not include those foreign, flat-footed parasites from the East who exploit us."

This was in March 1930. Six months later he declared himself in Graz for a "German and Christian" Greater Germany. In Salzburg a year later he called the Austrian Republic "a monstrosity". In the autumn of 1930, despite his responsible position as Vice-Chancellor and Minister of the Interior in Vaugoin's Government, he declared: "We shall fight on to victory even at the cost of a few Asiatic heads rolling in the sand", and, with a dramatic gesture at the Rathaus, declared of the duly elected city fathers that "We shall hang that gang from their own City Hall". Thus he proved himself an apt pupil of those who were then his (German) Nazi masters. In February 1933 he declared that the Austrians were "a part of the whole German race", denied "that we are a people of our own" and said that the Austrians would let no one force them into an anti-German position.

But barely a year later this volatile and superficial person was declaring that "the Austrian miracle has taken place again in 1934. Austria has found the strength to resist the stormy attack of a sixty million Reich, to overthrow armed Bolshevism at home, and to break the Nazi terror and Putsch". He declared that Austria "must remain independent even if Berlin should gain the power to put through the Anschluss of Austria and Germany". "There can be no Anschluss for us, because we know that it would mean nothing but the degradation of Austria to a colony of Prussia-Berlin." While the fit was on him, he displayed tremendous energy and driving-force. But in between these bouts of political intoxication, Starhemberg led the normal humdrum existence of an idle and self-indulgent young aristocrat. Boredom with politics, or the discovery of someone pleasanter to look on than an embryo fascist putschist would intervene. Then for months on end the Prince's desk piled high with untouched papers marked "Very Urgent". For weeks his closest political associates had no knowledge of his whereabouts. The Putsch of July 1934 caught Starhemberg bathing on the Lido and cost him the Chancellorship, for when he got back to Vienna the fighting was over and Mussolini had installed Schuschnigg as his nominee. When Schuschnigg neatly jockeyed Starhemberg out of the Cabinet, he had to be fetched from a gay party in the Kobenzl bar to learn his fate. And while the harassed Schuschnigg was playing a lone hand in 1938, during the last terrible month after Hitler's brutal

bullying in Berchtesgaden, Starhemberg was ski-ing at St. Moritz.

It was on April 24th, 1932, that there was a first indication of a serious rift within the lute of melodious "anti-marxism". The elections to city and parish councils on that date showed that the Nazi wing of the Fascists was gaining ground at the expense, not of the Socialist workers, who still stood firm as a rock against the rising tide of reaction, but at that of the Clericals. It was a national emergency. Brown shirts and Swastika armlets broke out like a fungoid growth all over the streets of Vienna. The rhythmic throbbing of the *Sprechchöre*, the senseless reiterations of clear-cut syllables with which Hitler had learnt to intoxicate the Teutonic tribes as do the ju-ju priests the African, began to deprive the lower middle-class youth of Vienna of their reasoning faculties. The Nazis had won seats from the Clericals—not many, but enough to shake their precarious domination of Parliament, for at the moment they were at loggerheads with the Heimwehr over unimportant questions. It was clear that parliamentary elections would result in a hopeless split in the reactionary forces and return the Social-Democrats as by far the strongest party, with power to call a halt to the whole anti-republican movement and disarm the Heimwehr counter-revolutionaries.

The Socialists demanded a dissolution. The vote of the Heimwehr on this motion would have been the decisive factor. To gain time, the Chancellor, Dr. Buresch, resigned, since this automatically postponed the motion for dissolution and allowed the opportunity of making a bargain with the Heimwehr. Into his place as Chancellor stepped the forty-year-old Minister of Agriculture, Engelbert Dollfuss.

## CHAPTER V

### “ MILLIMETTERNICH ”

ENGLEBERT DOLLFUSS, WHOSE DIMINUTIVE STATURE WAS TO give rise to a thousand and one political jokes and together with his quick, impulsive manner and ready smile, to enable him to obtain premature fame in the popular press for which a statesman of normal stature and gravity of demeanour would have had to wait three times as long, had started his career as secretary to an official of the Chamber of Agriculture. In Austria as in Germany, the *Verbände*—that untranslatable word for which “ associations ” or “ clubs ” of students is only a rough equivalent—at the Universities always managed to mark out certain reservations in the public services, and the “ C.V.”—Catholic Students’ Association—secured the diminutive Dollfuss his position in public life. He utilised it in turn to obtain for his colleagues in the Association a generous share of public posts and influence. That affected one side of his character. The other was influenced by his studies in Germany and his marriage to a Prussian peasant girl of Protestant stock. Between these two stools of Austrian Catholicism and Prussian Protestantism, the little Chancellor was destined to fall. One of his first acts as Chancellor was to secure the Lausanne Loan for Austria. The Nazis claim that he had promised Von Papen to accept no further obligations respecting Austria’s independence if Germany withheld her vote at Geneva when the Loan came before the League Council, and that Dollfuss broke his promise; hence, they say, the first Nazi hostility to Dollfuss.

It took Engelbert Dollfuss ten days to form his anti-Socialist cabinet consisting of the Clerical Party, the Farmers’ Party and the Heimwehr. The Pan-Germans made difficulties by putting forward extravagant demands for posts. The Social-Democrats, the largest and most united party in the State, were of course not even consulted by Dollfuss. Finally the Heimwehr forced Dollfuss, against his better judgment, to confer the portfolio of Education on a man whom he personally distrusted, the *rusé*

Dr. Anton Rintelen, Governor of Styria. Keeping his eye, as always, on the main chance, Rintelen insisted on retaining as well the Governorship of that province which jokingly acknowledged his domination with the name of "King Anton".

A few years before, when an Easter holiday was still possible for newspaper-men in Austria, I had spent a week-end with a colleague in a little inn at Aflenz, in Styria. Burnt into the beams of the ceiling was this little couplet :

*"Wer ehrlich denkt und handelt recht,  
Er bleibt im Dreck, es geht ihm schlecht,"*

which may be roughly translated as : "He who thinks honourably and behaves justly gets left behind and has no success". My colleague tried to persuade me that this was the national motto of Styria. Anyway the province did bear a crop of corruptionists in post-war Austria quite out of proportion to its percentage of the total population. The inclusion of Dr. Rintelen was due to the backing of the Styrian-Nazi wing of the Heimwehr, who also picked out Rintelen in 1934 as a pro-Nazi Chancellor to be the first successor to Dollfuss had the Nazi Putsch succeeded which cost the little Chancellor his life. In his maiden speech as Chancellor, Dollfuss made a false start by emphasising Austria's "Germanism" and at the same time insisting upon her independence. Under normal conditions this would have been a quite comprehensible line to take, but conditions were far from normal. Across the frontiers the movement of Adolf Hitler was already a grave threat to the continuance of such democracy as was left to Germany, and within Austria the noisiest prophets of Germanism were the Austrian Nazis. Dollfuss often talked of his democratic instincts. Had he rated democracy above class interests and above those of political Catholicism, his personal popularity with the most democratic peasantry in the country, those of Lower Austria, would have enabled him with every chance of success to drop the militant Heimwehr together with the reactionary wing of the Clericals and form a great democratic alliance with the Farmers' Party and the Social-Democrats. But for Dollfuss the Socialists were beyond the pale and such an idea never entered his head. In consequence, at the conclusion of his speech, the Socialist leader, Dr. Otto Bauer, moved a vote of non-confidence on the ground that the Dollfuss Cabinet was quite incapable of



uniting the nation to face the grave financial and economic difficulties confronting it. As early as July the Pan-Germans also moved a vote of non-confidence against him, and but for the death of Dr. Seipel (who was away, ill) on the day the vote was taken, the Government would have fallen. As it was, “ Autrichlieu’s ” death enabled someone to be nominated to vote for him and the Government was saved.

Apart from his indefinable personal charm and diminutive stature, the quality which stood Dr. Dollfuss in the best stead in winning popularity at home and abroad was his dauntless personal courage. It was a quality which his successor, Kurt von Schuschnigg, was to show he possessed in equal degree. Dollfuss had full need of courage from the very outset, although at first it was only the political courage to face a hostile Parliament with a steady majority of exactly one vote which was called for. His first success was to secure in August parliamentary acceptance of the Lausanne Loan against the bitter opposition of the Pan-Germans and pro-Nazi wing of the Heimwehr and the tactical opposition of the Social-Democrats.

One of the great drawbacks which Dollfuss had to contend with in a situation which called for the constant exercise of self-control and the spirit of compromise, was his own irascible temper and inordinate personal vanity. The little man’s fury was easily provoked in debate, and no one showed greater skill in doing this than Dr. Otto Bauer, the spiritual leader of the Socialist Party. Imperturbable, sarcastic, with a brilliantly destructive rather than constructive mind, it was an easy matter for Bauer without turning a hair to lash his opponent to inconceivable fury with his gentle drawl and icy, stinging phrases. Bauer’s mental gifts won him many enemies; his kindly nature, whole-hearted belief in Socialism and the devotion of his great intellectual gifts to the cause of the workers gave him a devoted following on the Left. He was a complete realist, as his Linzer Programme showed. One thing he could never forgive, and that was intellectual pretentiousness. He had an insolently contemptuous way of making this obvious in Parliament which I have seen more than once cause the self-satisfied, half-educated and generally stupid Clerical deputies drawn from the provincial bourgeoisie to leap to their feet, screaming and gesticulating their indignation at him with uncontrollable fury. Bauer would stand nonchalantly, one hand in



his pocket, with a little smile of genuine pleasure on his face, waiting for the storm he had deliberately provoked to subside in impotence.

One man Bauer never succeeded in provoking—Ignaz Seipel. These two bitter antagonists in politics had, it was an open secret, a real respect for one another. Seipel, the prelate, monarchist, traditionalist and reactionary, met Bauer, the Jewish agnostic, extreme republican and Marxist revolutionary, on the common ground of conscious intellectual superiority to their contemporaries. On this ground no meeting was possible between Bauer and Dollfuss, the quick-tempered, only superficially brilliant son of a peasant. I remember one day in Parliament hearing Bauer drawl out one of his typical mild-sounding phrases, the poison in which was apparent only after the sting had been most delicately inserted beneath the victim's skin. The victim, as so often, was Dollfuss. The little man sprang to his feet, stamping with fury and shouting out amidst the tumult of his supporters: "Insolence! insolence! I won't stand it!" Then, like an infuriated schoolboy, he scuttled from the Chamber into the couloir, where I joined a knot of journalists to hear him declare, still pink with indignation: "This is the end. Never, never will I stay in Parliament again when that man is speaking." He kept his word. Even so, Bauer subsequently here and there managed to sting the irascible statesman with an unexpected interruption, for after the death of Seipel he found no opponent worthy of his steel and amused himself by taunting his successors. But when a few months later Dollfuss suppressed Parliament, it occurred to me to wonder what part in this fateful decision had been played by Dollfuss' personal vanity and the gibes of his opponent. Before the armed clash came in February 1934, Otto Bauer's name had long headed the death list of Heimwehr and Clericals.

The position which Dollfuss took over was that of a country heading straight for national bankruptcy, unless the Lausanne Loan from the Western Powers (through the Bank of International Settlement) of £9,000,000, guaranteed by Britain and France, was accepted. The French insisted on the condition that for the period of the loan, twenty-two years, there should be no revival of the Customs-Union-with-Germany plan. This of course did not suit the book of the Rhenish-Westphalian heavy industrialists, and with very little disguise they started

interfering in Austrian internal affairs to secure the defeat of the proposition. At the time there seemed little prospect of the lenders ever seeing their money back, and it was a wise political rather than a sound financial investment in the interests of peace and to prevent the collapse of Austria and her engulfment by Germany. Germany was herself bankrupt and could not put up the money, but nevertheless claimed the right to interfere. It was this interference which started Dollfuss on his path of opposition to Germany, despite his early germanophile leanings. Had the British and French Governments posed the further condition that the money they were putting up was a loan to the democratic independent Republic of Austria and would be continued only to this Republic, making it clear that before it was forthcoming the Republic must be made secure by the dissolution and disarmament of the irregular counter-revolutionary Heimwehr who openly proclaimed that they were preparing for a bloodthirsty revolt, Dollfuss would have been unable to embark on his fatal course. But the appeals of the Social-Democrats in this direction were disregarded by the so-called Western “ democracies ”, and “ Millimetternich ” was left a free hand.

To my mind the “ Tragedy of Dollfuss ” is something much bigger than his callous murder by the latest saint to be canonised by the Third Reich, the traitor Sergeant-Major Otto Planetta, on whose grave Herr Hitler’s deputy Rudolf Hess was reverently placing a wreath within three days of the invasion of Austria in March 1938. The real tragedy is that Dollfuss, with his unusual personal courage, energy and determination, his political agility and personal charm, should have destroyed Austrian liberty in the name of Austrian independence. He came to office with no reactionary past. With his spellbinding gifts, he could easily have placed himself at the head of a great crusade for the defence of the democratic rights and national independence of the Austrian people which would have aroused the enthusiasm, not only of the sentimental foreigner whom astute press propaganda induced to fall for him at once, but of the politically educated as well. It is tempting to picture the service he might have rendered to liberty, not only in his own little country but across the frontiers of Germany, where the ravished democratic forces would have found new courage at the sight of one corner of the German-speaking world where the traditions of Weimar were upheld. There the now-drugged and blinded German masses

would have found their common language spoken by men free to express their own thoughts, instead of those of a tyrannous clique which were hammered into their minds with maddening reiteration until reason was atrophied. Instead, Dollfuss found no better weapons with which to fight German Fascism than those which he copied assiduously from it and from the similar tyranny of Italian Fascism.

Perhaps the greatest measure of guilt attaches to Britain and France for having failed to recognise the hopelessness of this attempt and for having done nothing to support the cause of real liberty and democracy in Austria. But international financiers have a constitutional affection for strong-hand methods, and can see in the Left only a threat to their profits. So they lent their millions to Dollfuss and left him to go ahead with the destruction of Socialism and the burdens which it imposed on the State revenues from which the service of their loan was to be met. The City reaped its reward when, after the collapse of Austria because the Left refused its support to Dollfuss' successor, the triumphant German invader repudiated their loans in June 1938. The heart-breaking blunders of British and French policy in respect to Austria were painfully apparent to any intelligent observer on the spot from the start. Left without democratic guidance or guarantees from these countries to whom the independence of Austria was of vital interest but on behalf of which they were unwilling to take any obligations, "Millimetternich" embarked on the hopeless task of trying to hold at bay in this Germanic country the native devil of German Fascism with the imported Beelzebub from Italy. Despite the bigoted Clericalism which he eventually pursued after he was left to find his only support in Vatican and Quirinal, Dollfuss was a man of essentially flexible character. Obstinance only developed when, after casting around for ways and means, he had definitely embarked on a particular course. Perhaps lulled by Mussolini's patently untrue declaration that Fascism was not an article of export, probably really approving of its extension to Austria, Britain and France left Italy to play policeman for them in protecting Austria from the threatened rape by Germany. Naturally Mussolini made his own terms—the brutal destruction of Socialism and democracy in Austria. Dollfuss paid in advance in February 1934 and Mussolini delivered the goods in the following July. But as the end drew near in the spring of 1938

the Duce made it clear that the contract was off. Hysterical nagging in London and Paris left the cynical Duce quite cold, and the two Powers who had rightly dreaded the harnessing of Austria's six million population and great natural resources to Hitler's war machine but were not prepared to lift a finger to prevent it, were bluntly told that this time they could do the police work themselves or take the consequences. Ribbentrop lunched with Halifax and told him that all was well at the very moment when the Prussian steam-roller was crushing down the frontier posts of Austria. The real consequences will be felt by the Frenchmen in the trenches and the Englishwomen in the bombed basement in the next war when Austrian cellulose propels Austrian iron-ore to their destruction.

This is how a brother-officer of Dollfuss' during the War characterised to me his flexibility :

“ We were a crowd of *Einjährig-Freiwillige* cadets, just joined up in the predominantly German-Nationalist regiment of the Kaiserjaeger. ‘ Lights out ’ had long sounded, and in the dark barrack-room an agitated political argument was in progress. I found myself alone in defending the principle of an ‘ Austrian Mission ’ as something apart from that of Germany. Amidst the volume of German-Nationalist sentiments which bombarded me from the darkness, came in curiously harsh notes from the far corner of the barrack-room some words of support. Next day I went to the corner to make the acquaintance of my second. It was Dollfuss.

“ His enthusiasm for Austrianism waned in the light of Austrian muddle and inefficiency during the War and Austrian weakness and helplessness after the defeat. He went to Germany on a mission to study agricultural methods. He returned with a boundless admiration for German efficiency, strength and honesty of character, with a tremendous enthusiasm for the Anschluss—and incidentally with a Prussian wife. He and I had our first quarrel when we stood to attention side by side while the band played Haydn's hymn and I sang the Austrian ‘ *Gott erhalte unsern Kaiser* ’, and he the German ‘ *Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles* ’.

“ It was Republican Germany which caught his imagination, and in the early post-war years Dollfuss was an enthusiast for democracy and for the socialisation of national industries.”

Yet it was this man who destroyed Parliament, the trade

unions, and Socialist Vienna, who died execrated by German nationalists as well as by fully-fledged Nazis as the man who had betrayed German-Austrian nationalism to Italy and to the interests of the Vatican.

It was perhaps his German-Nationalist past which rendered Dollfuss so half-hearted in the repression of Nazi terror. On the last evening of his life Dollfuss sent to the scaffold the twenty-year-old Socialist, Josef Gerl, who had attempted to blow up a signal mast on a little-used railway and wounded the policeman who tried to arrest him. He, a Socialist, was the first victim of the severe decree-laws issued to check Nazi terrorism. Hundreds of Nazi terrorists had been destroying property, endangering scores of lives and here and there taking lives, for twelve months; not one of them was hanged as he might have been under several of the Dollfuss decrees. Again and again Dollfuss threatened; always the Nazis escaped the extreme penalty. The first Nazis to feel the long-promised severity were Planetta and Holzweber, the murderer of Dollfuss and the leader of the 1934 Putsch.

At the trial of these two Nazis, all those who had also been present at the trial of the young Socialists Gerl and Anzboeck eight days earlier were struck by the contrast between the treatment meted out to Socialist and Nazi prisoners. Planetta and Holzweber were given an eminently patient hearing. The greatest latitude was allowed to them and to their lawyers in their defence. They were treated very much like honourable foes whom it was unfortunately necessary to hang as an example. They bore no signs of rough-handling and made no complaints of it. These were the men who had murdered a chancellor, plotted an outrageous coup and let loose a civil war in Austria.

A week earlier the two young Socialists had been brought up in the same building. They bore the marks of the same brutal beating by the police (among whom were many Nazis who secretly belonged to the S.S.) which hundreds of other Socialists underwent in February. Gerl told how he had been chained and cruelly beaten with truncheons and wooden clubs. Anzboeck told how every time he fainted with the pain of torture, the police threw cold water over him, and when he came round beat him again. The judge was cynical, sarcastic and brutal to these young men who were facing death as bravely as they had faced torture. When the judge asked Anzboeck how he dared to say he had been tortured, the boy pointed silently at his bandaged head. It

was Social-Democrats and Communists whom the Government rounded up in hundreds and interned in the last ten days before July 25th, leaving the Nazis in perfect peace to their plans for revolt.

After his death the legend was started that Dollfuss at the last saw the mistake he had made in crushing the Socialists and was prepared to make great concessions to bring about a reconciliation. The facts are that up to the very last, Dollfuss (unwisely) despised the outwardly crushed Socialists, saying privately that their good- or ill-will was a matter of indifference to him. He obstinately clung to the idea that the masses had forgotten Socialism and would accept his corporate Fascist State. One of his last decisions was to refuse the release of Mayor Seitz, who had written a personal appeal to the Chancellor not to let him die in prison and thus further provoke the workers. Dollfuss found it a supreme obstacle that if he released Seitz he would have to set free all the other Socialists not associated with the February fighting whom he had imprisoned without trial since February.

It was no wonder that the illegal Socialist movement circulated leaflets the day after the murder of Dollfuss, which ran :

“ The news of the death of Dollfuss was received with delight by the working-classes as that of the death of a tyrant and murderer of liberty. Austria is experiencing her June 30th ; as in the Reich, Fascists are murdering Fascists and we can look on with satisfaction at the process. Dollfuss is gone—his system must be destroyed too, but never through an alliance with the Brown Fascists.”

And a courageous Englishwoman who had come to Austria in February to help Dollfuss' victims, wrote to me after he was murdered : “ Much as I detest the filthy crime of the Nazis, the knowledge that Dollfuss was really dead made me terribly happy—not just politically happy, but personally—just like getting a huge box of chocolates ”.

Dr. Ernst Karl Winter, whom Dollfuss appointed Vice-Burgomaster of Vienna in the hope that the latter's connections with the workers would enable them to be won over to the idea of the Fascist corporations, told me that he drew up a programme of “ immediate necessities ” in the hope of reconciling Dr. Schuschnigg with the Socialists after Dollfuss was murdered. His immediate programme for Schuschnigg included :



1. The release of Mayor Seitz and other party leaders who had never been tried.
2. The release of all untried Social-Democrats from the concentration camps.
3. Amnesty for all who took part in the February fighting unless common law crimes have been proved against them.
4. Payment of the sums due to officials of the Social-Democratic trades unions and other organisations.
5. Revision of the dismissals of Socialists from the public services on political grounds.
6. The creation of a Cabinet post for a real representative of the workers.

The first three points were gradually realised; the last were not granted by Schuschnigg until—and then in principle only—the last despairing few days before he fell.

In September 1934 I wrote :

“ If there is to be any hope of reconciling the embittered masses of the workers still smarting under their treatment by the Fascists before, during and after February, any action taken must be immediate and ungrudging. Above all, there must be instant cessation of police and Heimwehr persecution of those who try to hold together the threads of their own organisation. Dr. Winter's programme is no more than a beginning. The restoration of democratic government would not only enable Dr. Schuschnigg to form a pact of mutual non-aggression with at least the former right-wing Social Democrats; it would enable him to attract into a conservative, German-National Party (who would indeed oppose Clericalism and Socialism, but by parliamentary instead of terrorist methods) a great many of what one might call ‘ *beige* ’ Nazi sympathisers, who are not yet dyed a deep brown and who are now shocked at the murder of the Chancellor. This would be a minor matter, however, beside the all-important consolidation of a democratic front against the Nazi peril.

“ It would involve escape from the Italian tutelage and from Heimwehr-Fascist domination. Is it inconceivable that Great Britain and France should persuade Italy that even a democratic, if stable, Austria would be a better bulwark against the appearance of brown-shirts on the Brenner than is Austria in its present chaotic condition, which is more like that of a minor South American republic than of a European State? Is it inconceivable that Prince Starhemberg and other Heimwehr leaders could be induced by the same Powers to get out of politics and become leaders of a new Austrian militia in which the Heimwehr and their old enemies of the Republican Defence Corps should participate? Unfortunately it is almost inconceivable that any such practical effort should seriously be taken to clear up the Austrian mess. The alternative is its continuance and recurrences of the violence of February 12th and July 25th.”

I made one mistake in this article. I wrote “ almost ”. It was quite inconceivable.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE BROWN FLOOD RISES

THE FIRST OPEN SIGN OF GERMAN NAZI INTERFERENCE IN Austrian affairs came in September 1932, when Dr. Goebbels insisted, against the wishes of the Austrian Government, on coming to Vienna to address a Nazi gathering; Hitler had half promised to come himself, but for some reason backed down, to the disappointment of the Austrian Nazis. Although elaborate police preparations had been made for the occasion, so weak numerically was the noisy Nazi movement at that time that not more than 15,000 people turned out to hear the man accustomed to address 100,000. It is amusing to recall that Goebbels devoted his speech to a bitter attack on the Papen Government in Germany, having been debarred from speaking directly about Austria.

The Government's preparations for the destruction of the Socialists were interrupted by the prolonged controversy over the Lausanne Loan, but of course the Heimwehr drilling and absolutely illegal machine-gun practice went on unchecked under the eyes of police and gendarmerie. Raiding the arms depots of the Republican Defence Corps, too, went on, while the Government promised to introduce bills for disarming the Heimwehr as well without any intention of doing so; the existing laws provided the fullest opportunity for this, but were only employed against the Socialists. In May, Starhemberg applied to the courts to appoint a receiver, giving as a reason the debts he had incurred in the "patriotic" work he had done in financing the arming of his Heimwehr battalion for the planned attack on the "Red" workers of Vienna. The same month the Hitlerites, who had secured a membership of fifteen on the Vienna Diet where previously they had not had a single representative, signalled their appearance in the Diet by a noisy anti-Austrian demonstration, and followed this up by a brutal attack on Jewish students in the University; as a result of this, that institution was closed for a week. The attack was repeated in October and



November. The mumbo-jumbo insanity of race-hatred was beginning to work, and more and more of the half-educated jobless were allowing their instinctive resentment against the capitalist system as a whole to be cunningly deflected from that system and turned against the minority of capitalists who adhered to the Jewish religion or had Jewish blood in their veins. On June 29th a mob of Hitlerite storm-troopers applied this argument *ad hominem* by raiding the Country Club at Lainz, smashing the furniture and beating up twenty persons, including several women. Among them were four persons who were of indisputably non-Teutonic origin, for they were the diplomatic representatives of four foreign countries. Encouraged by this triumph, the Nazis invaded the working-class suburb of Simmering in October and attacked the local Socialist headquarters. It turned out to be a hornets' nest, for the Republican Defence Corps men on duty opened fire on the Nazi aggressors, killing two of them. The police, among whom Nazi propaganda was already making headway, "restored order" by opening fire on the Socialist defenders of the building. There were forty-eight casualties on both sides, one policeman being among the killed.

The security of the State being now threatened by both Heimwehr and Nazis, Dollfuss appointed one of the leaders of the former, Major Fey, as Minister of Security. His first move to "secure" the Republic was to prohibit all parades by the Republican Defence Corps and all other semi-military bodies except his own anti-Republican Heimwehr. Socialist protests in Parliament were met by the Heimwehr with the pungent argument of well-filled inkpots, one of which irretrievably blackened the linen of one of their own leaders who happened to enter the Chamber at the moment when the barrage fire was at its hottest. In the midst of all this bickering, Hindenburg, together with the great landowner von Papen and the capitalist Hugenberg, found it necessary to silence the Socialist and Communist parties in Germany who, thanks to the quarrel of Chancellor General von Schleicher with Hugenberg and Papen, were at last in possession of certain unpleasant facts. These were the details of how the great capitalists and landowners had been looking after their own and pouring the taxes paid by the masses into the depleted coffers of the Prussian Junker aristocracy. There was another count in the indictment. Schleicher was co-operating with the trades unions. A common front of Ruhr

industrial capitalists and Prussian landed capitalists decided in January 1933 to put in charge the man whose one-track mind, fanaticism and uncompromising brutality made it certain that the Left would be silenced once and for all—the Austrian Adolf Hitler.

With the assistance of an improved edition of the Zinovieff Letter—the Reichstag fire—the German masses were stampeded in the desired direction and the reign of terror in Germany began. The Austrian Social-Democrats had always been, theoretically at least, in favour of union with the German Republic. Now, as they saw their comrades rounded up to the tune of a hundred thousand and herded into prison compounds called concentration camps where they were at the mercy of Nazi sadism, as hundreds of Left leaders and Jews were murdered with impunity in the course of a single year, as a far more scientific and merciless persecution of the Jews set in than Czarist Russia itself had ever known, as culture went up in a blaze of low-brow burnings of high- and medium-brow books, the Austrian Social-Democrats did a complete about turn and put hostility to the Anschluss in the forefront of their programme. The large section of the Clericals who in their hearts dreamed always of an eventual Habsburg restoration, shocked at the horrors in Germany, now came out openly against the Anschluss with a country whose rulers were seeking to destroy the power of their great Church. The shock of the pogroms in the Third Reich threw most of the well-to-do Jews of Austria off their balance. Panicking before the fate awaiting them if the Brown flood should overflow the frontiers, they were as ready to support Fascism or monarchy as the democratic Republic—and they saw the best weapons, army and police, in the hands of the two former. They made a fatal miscalculation, which earned those who became its victims the contemptuous name of “*Dollfuss-Juden*” among the Jewish leaders of the proletariat, who kept their heads. None of the Jews among the leaders of the Social-Democrats, of course, fell victims to any such insane delusion; Otto Bauer, Julius Deutsch, the commander of the Schutzbund (Republican Defence Corps), Oscar Pollak, Editor of the *Arbeiterzeitung*, the most popular of all Viennese journalists among the foreign correspondents, and hundreds more scientific Socialists saw the position with absolute clarity and redoubled their efforts to hold the line against the old foe, the Clerico-Heimwehr Govern-

ment, while counter-attacking the new and more dangerous foe, the Nazis, who were fast absorbing the reactionary but comparatively harmless Pan-Germans.

Typical of the misguided Jewish capitalists who joined hands with Dollfuss in the mad policy of emulating Nazi tactics to defeat the Nazis after first destroying the natural enemies of the latter was the Austrian munition king, Fritz Mandl. He seems worth a paragraph or two. His name was first heard of in the international Press when in January 1933 the armaments scandal broke in which he and the Anti-Semitic but adaptable Prince Starhemberg were the principal figures.

Many a fat trout have I pulled out of the River Triesting, a few stations above the Hirtenberg Munitions Factory of which he was chairman of directors. From Hirtenberg, tentacles reached out to the armaments works of many other lands, to Rhein-Metall of Düsseldorf, to Solothurn and Soleure, to the Dutch Patronen Hughholdjes en Metallwarenfabrik of Dordrecht, the Grünbacher Steenkohlenbergwerke A.-G., the Patronenfabrik A.-G. of Lichtenwoerth, the Jugapatronen und Metallwarenfabrik, Magyar-Ovar and many other members of the international armaments ring. Where the champagne was served at the proper temperature, the cocktails shaken by a skilful hand and the caviar served fresh, there Fritz Mandl was to be seen, often in the company of Prince Starhemberg, more frequently in that of the Prince's brother. A favourite spot which saw many wild Heimwehr parties was the open-air Kobenzl Bar terrace, whose ceiling is the sky, on good nights a purple-black vault star-spangled and moon-gashed. Here on many a soft summer evening such as saints can only flee or succumb to, little Fritz Mandl would see the sun rise to the strains of sentimental Viennese music in the company of slender young Italian officers in mufti with whom he was transacting armament deals. It was largely thanks to "Austria's Pocket Zaharoff" that when the Heimwehr finally struck at the Vienna workers in February 1934, they had at their disposal arms and munitions enough—in the opinion of one of the best-informed foreign military attachés in Vienna—to have equipped an army of 500,000 men with howitzers, machine-guns and rifles for a longish campaign. Even in 1931, in one little village, Hartberg, which had only 150 Heimwehr-men, 240 rifles, five machine-guns and a store of bombs were found; at least another 300 rifles and

five machine-guns were there but not discovered. Fritz Mandl spent a small fortune after he had married Heddy Kiesler, the actress, in trying to buy up the film "Extase", in which she had left practically none of her charms to the imagination. One country where he failed to do so was Italy. The reason was a piece of typical Fascist double-crossing. Although a Jew, Fritz Mandl was first a reactionary capitalist and business man, and shared Mussolini's favours quite impartially between the two great enemies of Austrian democracy, the Heimwehr and the Nazis. After the Nazi Putsch of July 25th, 1934, a small band of the Austrian Legion invaded Austria from Bavaria in support of the murderers of Dollfuss. They were disarmed and captured. Through his agents Mussolini learned that they had been armed with some of the very rifles which he had sent to Hirtenberg in 1931 for the use of his friend Dollfuss against the Austrian proletariat. So Mandl's offers were made in Italy in vain, and all the charms of his lovely wife were visible to any Italian with a couple of lira in his pocket.

In January 1933 Koloman Wallisch, Socialist Mayor of Bruck-an-der-Mur, who had been instrumental in forcing the unwilling Austrian Government to suppress the Pfriemer Putsch of the Heimwehr in 1931, blew up the scandal of the arms traffic between Austria, Italy and Hungary. He established that forty truck-loads of arms, in defiance of Article 134 of the Treaty of St. Germain, had been brought from Italy to Hirtenberg. The truck-loads consisted of between 40,000 and 50,000 rifles and 200 machine-guns consigned by Giuseppe Cortese, of Verona Arsenal, to Fritz Mendl in Hirtenberg, described as "scrap metal". These arms, of course, were only a small part of Mussolini's contribution to the fascisation of Europe. They were destined for division between the illegal Heimwehr and Hungary. The transaction was arranged between Starhemberg, General Goemboes, the Hungarian Minister of War, and General von Seeckt, Commander-in-Chief of the German Reichswehr when the three met at Varpalota, near Budapest, in the autumn of 1930. It was also discussed between Dollfuss and Goemboes in Budapest and between Goemboes and Mussolini in Rome. In the spring of 1932, Starhemberg, Mandl and Goemboes (now Premier) revised the contract, and in October 1932 Starhemberg and Mandl revisited Budapest to arrange the final details. The revelations put the Dollfuss Government in a painful position.

France and Britain tried to hush up the scandal, but Czechoslovakia, always afraid of Hungarian rearmament, insisted on it being brought before the League. This was more than Italy could face at the moment, and she accepted the British and French offers to try to hush up the affair by settling it through departmental channels. The Dollfuss Government held a white-washing enquiry and had the audacity to declare that the trucks had held "goods in transit" and that "it was impossible to ascertain what they had contained". The insistence of Czechoslovakia that the matter must be straightened out at last produced a reluctant note from France, with the still more reluctant support of Britain, demanding the return to Italy of the illegally imported arms. The Dollfuss Government gave the required assurance in somewhat equivocal form, but on February 24th, the head of the Austrian railwaymen's trade union, Herr Koenig, revealed that the General Manager of the State Railways, Herr Seefelder, had offered him a large bribe to divert to Hungary the trucks containing the arms which Austria was pretending to return to Italy. This shook the position of Dollfuss, but in the end he stayed—and so did the rifles. Some got as far as Innsbruck, where it was arranged from the Heimwehr to break open the trucks and "steal" the arms, which Fritz Mandl was determined they should have.

The exposure of the illegal arms traffic from Italy to Austria via Hungary sealed the fate of the Austrian Socialists. To both Mussolini and the Heimwehr it was clear that during the existence of this Party with a Parliament and a free Press, which gave its members the power to reveal such scandals, their plans could never be realised. So at Riccione in 1933 Dollfuss promised Mussolini that the Heimwehr-Fascist programme for the destruction of the Socialists should be pushed on at top speed. General Goemboes was equally interested in silencing these undesirable mentors of the peacefully slumbering consciences of the Western so-called democracies. The amazing comment of one of their diplomats on the arms scandal to me was, "We shall get no peace in Europe until that meddling little Beneš is in hell and Czechoslovakia partitioned". The day after Dollfuss returned from a conference with Goemboes in Budapest, the counter-revolution of February 12th, 1934, was carried through.

Freed of the *enfant terrible*, Social-Democracy, which stood in the way of the extension of Fascism northwards, Mussolini felt

himself secure in Central Europe and turned towards Abyssinia for fresh worlds to conquer, blind to the fact that the encouragement given him by the Third Reich was only a double-cross to make it easier to recover the ground lost to him in Austria once he had been induced to tangle himself up sufficiently in Africa and Spain. Any democracy, however small, is always an undesirable neighbour for reactionary Governments, and Goemboes certainly slept more easily o' nights when this bad example for the starving Magyar peasantry whom the open-ballot system deprived of all parliamentary representation had been removed. Freed from the taunts of Otto Bauer, who barely saved his neck by a flight in disguise into Czechoslovakia after the defeat and destruction at the hands of the Heimwehr and Dollfuss of all that his Party had built up, Dollfuss fondly imagined that he would be able to come to an arrangement on his own terms with the Nazis. As for Koloman Wallisch, who had revealed the whole scandal, he was hunted down like a dog and caught amidst the snows on the Yugoslav frontier, dragged back to his native town with his wife and hanged within a few hours; Koenig had also been put by Fritz Mandl on the hanging list of the Heimwehr but managed to escape. The grave of Wallisch is still a place of secret pilgrimage for the Austrian proletariat. Fritz Mandl is to-day among the hundreds of thousands of victims of the Nazi rape of Austria, for his Hirtenberg factory was one of the first pieces of Jewish property to be confiscated by the Nazis.

Dollfuss would not have been allowed either by the Socialists or by Czechoslovakia to forget the Hirtenberg revelations so quickly had not the Nazis in Germany succeeded in the following month in convincing a great part of the German electors, with the aid of the half-witted Dutch vagrant Van der Lubbe, that the Communists either had or might have done just what the Nazis wanted and set fire to the Reichstag. The establishment of full Nazi dictatorship in Germany was echoed promptly by renewed violence amongst the Austrian Nazis. On March 29th, they raided the Inner City in Vienna, smashing shop windows and mishandling Jews. In April the Styrian Heimwehr cast off their allegiance to Starhemberg and Dollfuss and became openly Nazi. In June the Nazi movement resorted to that organised terrorism, financed and armed from Germany, which culminated in the Putsch and murder of Dollfuss in July of the following year. The campaign started with an attempt to assassinate the



Tyrolese Heimwehr leader Steidle on June 11th. It is not without interest that when Franz Hofer, one of the would-be assassins of Steidle, was rescued from Innsbruck Prison and rushed across the Italian frontier, Italy refused to extradite him and allowed him to proceed to a hero's reception in Germany. It was usual for the Nazi Motor Corps to stand by to rush all murderers across the frontier into safety in Germany the moment the bomb had exploded or the revolver been fired. The constant evasion of punishment, often facilitated by disloyal police and gendarmerie, led to a glorification of crime among the youth of the country. Even Nazi professors at the University of Vienna were in despair over the ultimate result. No Nazi undergraduate bothered to work for his degree; it was much simpler to become a political fugitive through some daring explosive outrage and rely on the Führer to confer the degree in reward as was done in 1933 in Germany.

This long-continued wave of terrorism was not the work of a revolutionary Austrian movement. Documents which fell into the hands of the Austrian Government establish fifty times over that the murders were planned and the weapons to carry them through supplied by responsible leaders in Germany. To quote from the official Austrian publication, the Brown Book issued by the Government after the assassination of Dollfuss: "It is known and admitted by all parties concerned that the illegal Nazi organisation in Austria was ruled from Germany and formed an integral part of the German Nazi Party. . . . This is without parallel in the history of European policy and diplomacy."

Although the Nazi movement in Austria was always conducted from Germany, its historical roots were Austrian, for it was a development of the "Reichsverein of the German Workers of Austria", founded in 1913. For years it was just one of those innumerable gatherings of Teutonic cranks whose activities are carried on, as the Viennese say, "with the exclusion of the public". In 1928 its membership was not above 7000. In 1930 Adolf Hitler began to take the movement seriously. He sent in the German Theo Habicht in 1931 with almost unlimited financial resources to become "Inspector for Austria", and that same year the membership rose to 300,000. Alfred Edward Frauenfeld, a gentleman whose pure "Aryanism" was often called in question, was made *Gauleiter* for Vienna. It was he who first established the dreaded S.S. black-uniformed

guards, organised and equipped the storm-troopers with brown shirts and conducted an agitation, based on promises of incredible prosperity, among the unorganised unemployed. At the end of 1931 the Party spent £5000 on the purchase of the first Brown House in the Hirschengasse in Vienna. More and more Reichs-german organisers were sent in by Hitler to stiffen the backs of the despised but courted Austrian "*Schlappschwänze*", as the Germans contemptuously called them in private. The terrorist character of the movement was revealed even before the open wave of terror started when in January 1933 a large depot of explosives was discovered in the house of Kurt Barisani, commandant of the Vienna Nazi motorised detachment. On his subsequent flight to Germany he was, of course, given a high command in the Austrian Legion.

The whole movement had a treasonable character for every patriotic Austrian, for it ignored from the start the existence of a frontier between the two countries, just as to-day Hitler brushed aside the existence of the frontier between Czechoslovakia and Germany months before the Munich betrayal destroyed it, by appointing the fugitive Sudeten Nazi leader Krebs as *Gauleiter*—for an unnamed *Gau* which was, of course, one of the German-speaking areas of the Czechoslovak Republic. Here is what Habicht caused to be inscribed in the Party members' book in 1932 :

" The Nazi Party is a State of its own within the present ' system '. The Party State differs from the present State only in that : (1) it does not include all the citizens, and in fact rejects a certain part of them ; (2) has not secured control of the armed forces of the State. At the moment of the seizure of power, the party organisations will replace or take over the State executive. Party and State will be one."

These insolent principles were enunciated by a movement little more important at the time than is that of Mosley in Britain to-day.

A vast underground organisation was established after the prohibition of the Party, the most important job of which was to seduce members of the State executive from their allegiance. With the army they had little success ; with the police a great deal. It was above all the treachery of a big section of the Vienna police which paralysed resistance in the capital to the rape of Austria in March 1938. Here and there a military plot was discovered as early as 1933, but on the whole Austrian military discipline held good until the end.



An incredible exhibition on diplomatic soil at which I was present was given during the uninvited visit of the German Nazi Franck, Bavarian Minister of Justice, in May. He was received at the aerodrome on a Saturday by Dr. Skubl, Deputy Police President, who told him in the name of the Austrian Government that his unannounced visit was unwelcome. He addressed a big open-air meeting that night on the subject of the "Liberation of Vienna from the Turks" in a manner which left no doubt to his Nazi hearers that he meant the "liberation" of the Nazi minority from the rule of the elected Government of the country. Next day, Sunday, I witnessed the violent demonstrations of the Nazis against a march of 40,000 Heimwehr-men. Over 500 arrests were made in the course of numerous sabre charges. That afternoon I was invited by Franck to meet him at the German legation. Here the choleric Nazi, who looked an ideal commandant for a concentration camp and was the Minister of a nominally friendly State, abused diplomatic immunity to scream out attacks on the country he was visiting at a few selected foreign newspaper-men until I thought he would break a blood vessel. But Nazi arteries are tougher than that. This was only the beginning of the insolence of Franck. He proceeded to Graz, where he told his Nazi audience that his visit did not concern itself with the Government of the country. He had come to tell its people that they would soon be united with Germany. He declared that on his return to Germany he would persuade Hitler to make Germans boycott Austria until the Government apologised for snubbing him. It sounded like the ravings of a megalomaniac. Hitler made the ravings good by imposing within a fortnight the famous "1000-Mark Barrier", which for years did untold harm to Austria by preventing any German from visiting the country without the payment of a 1000-marks fine. On the following day the Austrian Government at last did what it should have done at the start—arrested this insolent "statesman" as he was trying to hurl fresh invective at a crowd of Nazis from his hotel balcony in Salzburg, and escorted him across the frontier.

Nothing was omitted in the German campaign to force Austria into submission. Bomb outrages almost daily, the cutting of telephone cables, Nazi leaflets fouling their own nest by trying to cause financial panic at home and distrust abroad, a ridiculous "smokers' strike" designed to harm the tobacco monopoly,

nightly anti-Austrian broadcasts from the German senders addressed to the Austrian people, shootings on the frontier, the formation of an "Austrian Legion" of traitors who had fled the country after the commission of criminal acts, propaganda dropped from German airplanes, murder after murder. Soon there was naturally a German-organised attempt to assassinate Dollfuss himself. In October 1933 a young Nazi named Rudolf Dertil fired two bullets into him as he was leaving Parliament. So surrounded was Dollfuss by treachery that the police made great efforts to conceal Dertil's party allegiance, trying to persuade the world that he was a Socialist, just as on the eve of the Nazi Putsch of July 1934 they spread stories that a great "Red Rising" was imminent. From then on, if not before, Dollfuss must have realised that unless he surrendered to the Nazis, sooner or later one of their gunmen would get him. Dollfuss kept on, despite the shoals of letters threatening him with death; once, by way of variation, the Nazis sent his wife an expensive outfit of widow's weeds. But all his courage was vitiated by the false step he had taken in March 1933.

## CHAPTER VII

### WAR ON TWO FRONTS

PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT IN AUSTRIA WAS BROUGHT TO an end on March 4th, 1933, through a Socialist deputy yielding to the imperative calls of nature and allowing a fellow-Socialist to hand in his voting card while he was in the lavatory. It is a melancholy reflection that six million people lost their liberties because of the weakness of one man's bladder.

The occasion was a division on the Government's proposals for victimisation of a number of leaders of an unsuccessful railway strike which had been provoked by Fascist aggression. The Government were defeated by one vote—that of the lavatory absentee. They refused to accept the defeat on a technical point, that the deputy's comrade had handed in the voting card without proof that he was authorised to do so on behalf of the missing member. Thereupon the Social-Democratic President of Parliament, Dr. Karl Renner, resigned in protest. Ex-Chancellor Dr. Ramek, next on the list, refused to take over the responsibility from Renner, as did the third reserve President, the Pan-German Straffner. The session was adjourned in the absence of a President and nobody paid much attention to the incident. The quick brain of Dr. Dollfuss, however, saw in it a chance to shut up the institution he detested and free himself from the irritations of Dr. Otto Bauer, the danger of Nazi demands for a dissolution and new elections, and the looming necessity of coalition with the Socialists to avoid it. High up in the councils of himself and General Vaugoin was that *rara avis*, a Jewish civil servant, named Dr. Hecht. Hecht was a legal genius and casuist, and as the result of Dollfuss, Hecht and a few others putting their heads together for forty-eight hours, the astounded Austrian public learned on March 6th that democratic government had come to an end, that the Chancellor had carried a bloodless "cold Putsch" and would henceforth rule them by means of an instrument of more than doubtful validity. This was a long-forgotten war-time measure of the

Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, authorising the Imperial Government of 1916 to regulate certain war-time emergency matters relating to economics by decrees issued without the consent of Parliament, for which parliamentary sanction would eventually have to be obtained. Such sanction never was, of course, obtained by Dollfuss, and Parliament was finally abolished by the dictated Constitution of May 1934. The discovery of this old Imperial emergency measure and its long-continued application was the work of Dr. Hecht. Four years later he paid in full measure for the evil service he rendered to liberty, and therefore to the cause of his own race, which is always the first to suffer when liberal philosophy and parliamentary democracy are replaced by totalitarianism. Dr. Hecht was one of the first victims of the Nazi triumph of March 1938. Incidentally, I have from Nazi sources an authentic account of one experience of his when first arrested. In accordance with the ingenious Nazi plan for adding mental to the physical sufferings of their victims, this enemy of the workers and of democracy was placed (as well as Hofrat Berger, the dreaded anti-Red Chief of the Vienna police) in a cell built for one inmate, together with a stout proletarian Communist, on whom Hecht's regulations had often brought arrest and who had passed through many third-degree ordeals at the hands of Berger. The Nazis shouted out that the only bed in the cell belonged to the Communist, and that the two high Government officials must lie on the floor. For the first time in his life, Hecht, who was already suffering terribly from his treatment after arrest, met one of those ravening beasts, the Communists, face to face. After the Nazi guards had withdrawn, Dr. Hecht was horrified to find his shoulder shaken by the Communist.

"Get up and take the bed", he said. "You and the Herr Hofrat here between you have been good enough to train me in sleeping on floors so often that I am used to it, and you are a sick man."

Hecht told the story to a milder storm-trooper later, with the comment:

"He cannot have been a proper Communist after all, because they only take, never sacrifice anything."

Hecht was sent to Dachau, that Bavarian inferno, which so richly deserves to bear the inscription over its gates which Dante placed over those of hell. Under what horrible circumstances the life of Dr. Dollfuss' legal adviser was brought to an

end, the world is unlikely to learn until Dachau itself and the bestial system behind it are themselves brought to an end when the German people recover liberty and sanity. His death was announced early in June. Before it came to him he doubtless realised that he had lived several months too long. His body came back to Vienna in a sealed coffin.

In later years not only the Social-Democrats but many anti-socialist democrats, pacifists and lovers of liberty generally came to the conclusion that of the several occasions when Socialism should have stood firm and did not, the gravest error committed was when it failed to meet the violence of Dr. Dollfuss by counter-violence and take up arms for the defence of parliamentary liberty in March 1933. Certainly the scenes which I witnessed on March 15th cried aloud for an Austrian Cromwell. On that day Pan-German Straffner out-Hechted Dr. Hecht by discovering that there was no provision in the rules of the House permitting him to resign, that therefore his failure to take over from Renner and Ramek was null and void, and that, as President of the House, he had to summon it. President Miklas had backed Dollfuss by a letter to Straffner asking him not to summon Parliament; Straffner replied that he could not flinch from his duty. Thereupon Dollfuss endeavoured to prevent the sitting by force.

When I made my way to Parliament that afternoon to attend the session, I found the Ringstrasse blocked with barbed-wire entanglements and rifle-rests. The grounds of the Hofburg were crowded with mounted police with slung carbines, storm companies with rifles, hand grenades and steel helmets and the special "quick-action charabancs" of the police alarm detachments. The corridors of Parliament were filled with stubborn-jawed, keen-eyed men—500 detectives of the secret and criminal investigation police. The Socialist Party did make some preparation for action, and members had been told that on the arrest of a single deputy, the tram service would stop as a signal for a general strike. But Dollfuss, a master at out-flanking tactics, was always clever enough never to take the frontal action which the Socialists had decided should be the signal for resistance. On this occasion his armed forces surrounding Parliament and the detectives inside were themselves outflanked. From the small hours of the morning deputies had been unobtrusively trickling into Parliament, and at 2 p.m. shouts arose in the corridors, "Five hundred secret police have invaded this building". Together with deputies not

already in the building, I was refused permission to enter, despite my valid press permit. By 2.30 detectives barred the entrance to the Chamber, but already a quorum had collected inside. Dr. Straffner arose and made the last speech in a freely elected Parliament that Austria was to hear.

“As the police have prevented other deputies from entering”, he said, “I declare the session opened, as we have already a quorum. I shall take legal action in every case where members have been illegally prevented by the police from fulfilling their constitutional functions. I will inform members in writing when the next session will be held. This session is closed.” There was no next session. Thus died Parliamentary Government in Austria.

The coup of Dollfuss and the Clericals was backed by the Heimwehr. In many parts of the country Heimwehr and police raided the secret arm depots of the Republican Defence Corps. To counteract the well-known Socialist sympathies of part of the Vienna garrison and the Nazi sympathies of a large part of the Vienna police, Dollfuss had thousands of Heimwehr brought into Vienna. Four thousand were put into the Ministry of Agriculture, and two thousand into the Military Club. They openly carried their illegal arms. There is little doubt that Dollfuss intended at this time to carry through a full Putsch with the aid of the Heimwehr, but found that he had not the strength. On March 5th, in the midst of all this excitement, occurred the “Reichstag fire elections” in Germany which established the Nazi dictatorship. Despite the fact that he was to destroy Parliament next day, it was on March 5th, too, that Dr. Dollfuss declared that he had always stood on the basis of parliamentarianism. The Nazis, though still numerically weak, were themselves preparing a Putsch to anticipate the Heimwehr. There were street riots in the Graben and the Kärntnerstrasse by brown-shirted Nazis shouting the slogans “Heil Hitler” and “Perish Juda”. In the working-class suburbs they fought with the Socialists. Heimwehr were moved up from all parts of Austria and concentrated around Vienna. The Socialists secured and published a secret railway order for special trains to be kept ready to bring up a further 12,000 Heimwehr to the capital. The Nazi police president of Vienna, Dr. Brandl, checkmated the Heimwehr Minister of Security, Major Fey, by surrounding the Heimwehr in the Ministry of Agriculture and telling them, “If you do not clear out, we shoot”. The

Heimwehr cleared out, and Dr. Brandl was dismissed next day by Chancellor Dollfuss. Starhemberg boasted in a speech on March 21st that he had persuaded the Chancellor to dismiss Brandl for countering the Heimwehr plans. He told the Heimwehr to take a brief rest, as soon they would have to deliver the frontal attack on the Socialists. Their next objectives were the dissolution of the Republican Defence Corps and the seizure of power in Vienna, when the elected Burgomaster, Karl Seitz, leader of the Socialist Party, was to be removed and replaced by a nominated Commissar. On March 31st the Government carried out the first part of this Heimwehr programme of destroying all possibility of resistance to a Fascist coup by proclaiming the dissolution of the Republican Defence Corps. In the midst of the excitement came the visit of Dr. Franck from Bavaria to pour oil on the flames. Thirty thousand Heimwehr marched on the Sunday of the visit from Schönbrunn to the Ringstrasse, and I myself witnessed scores of violent conflicts between them and the crowds, consisting partly of Nazis and partly of Socialists. Franck had the insolence the following day to tell the Graz Nazis to disarm the police, as the country "had had enough of Dollfuss".

Dollfuss was now deeply committed to the two-front war against Social-Democrats and Nazis. But although the latter threatened the very existence of the country, resorted daily to terrorism, bomb-throwing and assassination, and were backed by the nation of 66,000,000 across the frontier over which Hitler had acquired absolute power, the obstinate Chancellor rejected a whole series of offers from the Socialists, whose methods were pacific and who demanded nothing more than the full application of the existing Constitution, to form a common democratic front against the Nazi peril. On the contrary, Dollfuss at the end of May received the rabid German "Inspector for Austria" of the Nazis, Theo Habicht, and discussed with him proposals for a Nazi-Clerical coalition against the Socialists. Habicht declared that the initiative came from Dollfuss, which the Chancellor, while admitting the interviews themselves, denied. The go-between was the rusé "King Anton" Rintelen of Styria. Heimwehr were mobilised and placed as guards on the German frontier. In June the full Nazi terrorist campaign came into operation with the attempted assassination of Steidle. The following day, on June 12th, there was an outburst of Nazi bomb-throwing all over Austria. A Jewish jeweller named



Futterweit and one of his customers were killed in Vienna and many people injured by a bomb wrapped in a lady's silk stocking which was hurled into his shop by Nazis from a motor-car. This was the first Nazi murder; its perpetrator has now a high post in Vienna as his reward. In the Inner City and outside the University, Nazis hurled detonators and fought truncheon-armed police with their clubs and life-preservers. That night the Government shut up Nazi "Brown Houses" throughout the country and made up their minds to dissolve the Party. Four days later Nazi terrorists cut a number of the most important telephone cables in Austria and resorted to arson and the use of infernal machines in many other places. Habicht was arrested, despite Hitler's attempts to give him diplomatic immunity by conferring on him the nominal title of Press Attaché to the German legation. Over a thousand Nazi leaders, including eighty-one provincial mayors, followed him into an all-too-brief term of imprisonment. In the Lower Austrian Diet, the Socialist Deputy Schneidmadl expressed the indignation of the workers at the Nazi tactics.

"You who burned down the Reichstag and based on this fire all the infamies and bestialities to which you have since subjected the German masses, are now bringing arson and murder to Austria", he said. "You want to make of our country one more prison-cell in that huge dungeon which Germany has become. We have lost our German Fatherland, and will never find it again until sixty million Germans have shaken off their chains." The session ended in a free-for-all of Nazis, Clericals, Heimwehr and Socialists.

The Nazi Party was suppressed, and brown shirts and swastika banners and badges were forbidden after the terrorist actions of June 19th, among them an attempt to destroy the Salzburg reservoir and flood the country with 3,000,000 cubic metres of water. The worst of the many terrorist outrages of this day occurred near Krems, where Nazis ambushed a detachment of Heimwehr who were returning to barracks through a sunken road and bombed them from the high banks. One of the Heimwehr, with great presence of mind, seized one of the bombs and threw it back at the Nazis. Two others exploded, killing and wounding several of the Heimwehr boys. Six of the Nazi terrorists were arrested, but, as usual, those who had actually thrown the bombs had been spirited across the German frontier. The whole armed forces of Austria, including the Heimwehr, were ordered to stand by. Starhemberg urged his



followers to be relentless towards "the bestial Brown murderers". The following day I wrote :

"The Nazis claim that Dollfuss has no more than twenty-five per cent. of the population behind him. This is probably a correct estimate. It is open to the Chancellor to increase his support to at least seventy-five per cent. by accepting the proffered hand of the Social-Democrats. This is the largest individual Party of Austria; it obtained forty per cent. of the votes at the last election. The differences between them are many, but the Socialists recognise in the Nazis a common menace. All they are now asking from Dollfuss in return for forming a common front with him is the restoration of parliamentary government which he has suspended. If the Nazi danger compels the Chancellor to form a united Republican front, he may go down to history as the man who preserved the political independence of Austria. How long he can stand alone against Nazi pressure is a question that the immediate future must decide." But the Chancellor rejected all ideas of a pact with "anti-Christ" which would have involved a restoration of the institution of Parliament, which he hated. The Nazi organisation "went underground", and as soon as the necessary explosives had arrived from Germany, terrorism was intensified. As Dr. Schuschnigg has written :

"Bombing and dynamiting were introduced into Austrian politics. Then followed outrages with bombs, infernal machines and explosives of every description, all designed to prepare the atmosphere necessary for civil war. Bridges, roads, telegraph installations, as well as houses and people whom it was desired to put out of the way, were approved objects of attack." There was "the economic boycott, the dissemination of disquieting rumours, the persistent attempt to wear down the nerves of the Austrian people . . . the insane methods such as the smokers' strike, the taxpayers' strike and the continually repeated false alarms of a march on Austria . . . the political murders and attempted assassinations."

There were mornings when from my own flat in the Habsburgergasse I heard as many as four Nazi bombs detonated in the surrounding streets. Among the innumerable murder plots of the Nazis was that of a twenty-year-old Prussian ornament of the night bars of Vienna, Baron Werner von Alvensleben, to assassinate Major Fey. Fortunately for Fey, in the course of his missionary work for the Nazi cause among the prostitutes of one well-known Vienna bar, Von Alvensleben boasted of the

plot in his cups and was arrested. Asked for the name of his accomplices in this plot and in the attempted murder of Steidle, in which he had also been concerned, the would-be assassin drew himself up with true aristocratic dignity and declared: "A Prussian Junker never betrays a friend". He was given a long sentence, but, like all other Nazi criminals—in contrast to the political prisoners made from the Socialist ranks—he did not have to serve it, but was released the following Christmas.

Instead of compromising with the Social-Democrats, the Government oppressed them with increasing severity, and turned for support to Fascist Italy. On September 11th, at the great parade of his followers on the Vienna Trotting Racecourse, Dr. Dollfuss proclaimed with enthusiasm the death of liberty in Austria. From the grand stand I watched the outwardly picturesque but terribly depressing spectacle for anyone who had to study the successive developments in the Greek tragedy of Austria's destruction at the hands of her glowingly patriotic but misguided Chancellor. In company columns the Heimwehr-Fascists stood drawn up on the turf in their green uniforms, flanked by Tyrolese National Guards in picturesque national costume and sugar-loaf hats with osprey plumes which quivered in the breeze like a forest of aspen leaves. Dark green or black-and-red jackets and shorts tailed off into snow-white stockings. Catholic semi-Fascist peasant irregulars stood there in many varieties of picturesque Alpine costumes, in front of them blue-and-yellow-shirted scout battalions. All the peasant costumes of Austria's alps and valleys were represented, from the broad-brimmed, gold-lace hats, which so becomingly framed the faces of girls from Upper Austria, to the hideous little black-straw hats, tight-fitting black bodices and skirts reaching well down below the ankles of the women of Tyrol. The hundred thousand broke into enthusiastic cheering, shouts of "Hail" and fluttering handkerchiefs as a little man in the grey-green uniform of the Tyrolese Kaiserjaeger, with a cape draped from his shoulders and a white falcon's feather in his cap, trotted out from the grand stand and scuttled up into the red-draped rostrum from which his speech was delivered.

"The old Parliament with its leaders and members is gone—never to return. The Liberal-Capitalist economic system is gone—never to return. Socialist influence is dead—for ever. I announce the death of Parliament." French warnings of consequent hostility prevented him from actually using the

word "Fascism" in his programmatic declarations, but in effect he proclaimed that Austria had gone over to Fascism on the Italian model. He sentimentalised about the good old times when peasants and serfs sat together at table and no wicked French revolution had inspired the under-dog with "socialist materialism" or revealed to him the existence of class distinctions and class warfare. He spared the Nazis, who were his real enemies, everything except mild reproaches for having attacked him in the rear while he was engaged in destroying the forces of Social-Democracy. Again and again he assailed the men who had built up the Republic to which he had taken an oath of loyalty and who had created the sun-bathed workers' dwellings in which some of his hearers must have lived as "the modern anti-Christ". It was a pitiful display of bigotry, prejudice and wilful blindness to a terrible danger. I went home from the Trabrennplatz full of gloomy anticipations for the little country I had come to love.

Throughout the terrorist campaign, secret contact was kept up between Dollfuss and Nazi leaders—particularly the Nazis in the Third Reich. Just after the Trabrennplatz parade, the existence of negotiations between Neurath, Rosenberg and the Austrian Minister in Berlin, Tauschitz, were revealed. They broke down on the extravagance of the Nazi demands. On September 20th, Dollfuss carried out another bloodless coup by resigning and returning to office with the vital portfolios of Army, Police, and Gendarmerie, Foreign Affairs and Agriculture in his own hands. From this day onwards Dollfuss was Dictator of Austria, and pushed ahead with his plans for establishing a corporative, Roman Catholic State. Less than three weeks later came the Nazi Dertil's attempt to assassinate him, giving fresh impetus to general terrorism. Tyrol was now made the objective of particularly violent attacks, and the municipality of Imst, which had shown its Nazi sympathies six months before by conferring honorary citizenship on Adolf Hitler, unanimously struck his name off the rolls. In December, after a particularly bad series of bomb outrages, the Viennese Nazi leader Frauenfeld was arrested and a system of "Lightning Courts" established with power to impose the death penalty in very bad cases. It was typical of Dr. Dollfuss' real aims that the only persons he hanged under this decree, nominally devised to meet the Nazi peril, were Socialists accused of resistance to the Heimwehr counter-revolution.

## CHAPTER VIII

### DOLLFUSS CHOOSES SUICIDE

JUST WHEN DOLLFUSS DECIDED TO COMMIT POLITICAL SUICIDE by destroying the only possible stout-hearted allies, the Socialists, who could have put life and driving-force into his artificial "Fatherland Front" and replaced the imported and unpopular fascism of his Heimwehr with something vital, rooted in the soil, I do not know. But there is evidence enough that it was no sudden decision and was taken only after a number of conferences outside the country, especially the fatal one with Mussolini at Riccione, and that with Goemboes in Budapest only forty-eight hours before Dollfuss and the Heimwehr struck. From the moment this destruction had been carried through, I never had another doubt as to what the end would be for Austria—a Nazi triumph. The workers had been made powerless to overthrow the Clerico-Fascist tyranny, which was itself too weak to triumph in the two-front war against two live movements, Nazism and Revolutionary Socialism. For a time this tyranny stood, because its two enemies hated one another even more than they hated the Clerico-Fascist regime. The situation could always have been saved by any liberal-minded successor to Dollfuss who would have had the courage to repair as far as possible the wrongs done to the workers in February 1934, particularly after Schuschnigg had later eliminated the Heimwehr. But this would have involved a reversal of policy which I was certain Austrian Clericalism, with its stiff-necked obstinacy, had neither the flexibility nor the moral courage to make. The gulf was not one which could be bridged by the most skilful Socialist leadership. In the last fatal weeks of February and March 1938 my greatest concern was to discover what hopes there were of the Left being brought into line with Schuschnigg against the horrors which awaited the country when the threatened German invasion and the handing over of the decent part of the population to the Nazi mobs to torture and plunder began. I was in close touch with many leaders of the

underground Revolutionary Socialist and Communist movements, and had many good friends among the rank-and-file workers. While the leaders, in the face of the terrible danger drawing hourly nearer, were anxious to find a way to join forces with Schuschnigg, the rank and file were literally incapable of forgetting the horrors of February 1934 and the subsequent years of oppression.

Typical of what I heard amongst the rank and file were the sentiments expressed by a politically educated washerwoman of my acquaintance, whose husband had several times been imprisoned for his share in the work of holding together the Socialist movement underground.

“Frau Hauer, what do the Comrades say in your tenement now when you are gossiping together round the communal water-tap?” I asked her several times, and always got the answer: “Still the same thing. They say: ‘We will follow the orders of our underground leaders, after they have tied Schuschnigg down to making what reparation he can for all we have suffered, if they are able to get these orders to us in time.’ But we say: ‘The howitzers and the gallows of 1934 still separate us from Schuschnigg. We can never fight under his banner, but if our leaders can get arms for us and give us the parole, we are ready, though unwillingly, to fight at his side against the common danger.’ Of course my husband and I, as Revolutionary Socialist leaders, know that we ought to join forces with Schuschnigg at once without too many conditions, because the Brown terror will have an efficiency which the Black terror never had, but working underground as we do still, it is impossible to persuade the masses of this in time. Far too many of them cowered in their cellars during those three days of February 1934, while the shells and machine-gun bullets shattered the great blocks of houses we Socialists had built ourselves. Too many had friends or relations killed or horribly wounded, far too many knew and loved the leaders the others hanged. We were two-thirds of the Vienna population, and there is scarcely one who was not robbed of some contribution or other when they seized our Socialist institutions. I am desperate when I hear that phrase every day—‘the guns and the gallows part us from Schuschnigg’, but what can we do?”

After all was over, when I had my order of expulsion, I managed to find a few moments to dash out in a taxi to Florids-

dorf to say good-bye to this fine person—probably for ever. She had tears in her eyes, but raised a clenched fist out of the wash-tub and whispered: “*Freiheit!* We shall never, never change—not even if one day we are forced to wear the cursed Swastika, that badge of tyranny. My husband says he will never do that. I, myself, think we can work better for liberation if we do. It may be only months, but I suppose it will be many years, before I can say aloud the word I can only whisper to you now. But in overalls or in Brown shirts, believe me and tell the world that the heart of the Viennese Socialist worker will never have changed, and that when the hour comes it will find us ready to strike, and strike hard, against this horror which has come to us. You know how we have waited already four years unchanging for a chance to strike at the lesser tyranny of the Blacks. When you are over the border and happily breathing free air again, don’t let anyone persuade you in the years to come that we working-people in Vienna have gone Nazi. If they offer us work, we shall accept it, to live—but we shall hate them the more for every gift we are forced to take from their hands.” These were the people and this was the spirit whose co-operation Dollfuss rejected in February 1934. Was not that suicide?

During 1933, after his suppression of Parliament, Dollfuss issued over three hundred illegal and unconstitutional decrees allegedly based on Dr. Hecht’s discovery of the fifteen-year-old law of the long-dead Monarchy, passed only to enable certain economic damage in war-time to be quickly repaired without waiting for parliamentary intervention. Dollfuss used it as an instrument of class warfare to diminish the social rights of the wage-earners, to increase the rents of property-owners, to subsidise his peasant followers at the cost of the city proletariat, to restrict the right of trial by jury, destroy the freedom of the Press and of assembly and to make an end of the sanctity of the mails. By virtue of it he eliminated many cultural and sports organisations of the Socialists and dissolved the Republican Defence Corps while piling up arms for the counter-revolutionary Heimwehr whom he finally legalised for the work of destroying the Republic as special constables. Many of them, as documents produced by the Socialists in the Lower Austrian Diet proved, were common criminals, for the decent city workman could rarely be tempted by high pay, even after

years of unemployment, to join the ranks of the anti-Socialist battalions. Idealism in the Heimwehr ranks was almost entirely restricted to the Catholic peasantry. There were even cases of Heimwehr special constables in uniform being caught at burglary and handed over to the regular police!

Early in 1934 began the final preparations for zero hour. The industrial districts where the Socialists were particularly strong, and where they were in charge of the municipalities were forced by the Government to accept and pay for large detachments of the unwanted Heimwehr "police", who proceeded to terrorise the workers. On January 11th Dollfuss put the key positions of the command of army and police in the hands of Major Emil Fey, making this man, who Sunday after Sunday had proclaimed in speeches his determination to destroy the democratic Republic, its "Minister of Security". Next day Fey arrested Count Alberti, one of the principal lieutenants of his rival for the Heimwehr leadership, Prince Starhemberg, and dismissed him from the command of the Lower Austrian Heimwehr. At the moment of his arrest Alberti was found by the police to be conferring with two Nazi rebel leaders, Alfred Frauenfeld and Schattenfroh. Fey, himself making desperate efforts to contact with the Nazis, feared that Starhemberg would get in first. These were the people and such were the forces which Dr. Dollfuss chose to rely on against the Nazis rather than compound with the Socialists.

Alberti had been arrested at the house of Frauenfeld. Another party to the conspiracy caught there turned out to be Prince Josiah Waldegg-Pyrmont, who was attached to the staff of the German Legation in Vienna. Here was fresh proof of the Reich's conspiracy with the illegal Austrian Nazi movement, for Waldegg-Pyrmont, it was established, had been sent to Austria by Rosenberg, head of Hitler's Foreign Department, as a liaison officer between it and the Austrian Nazi plotters. Compromising documents were found which put Starhemberg himself in a more than doubtful light; he promptly appointed another pro-Nazi Heimwehr leader to succeed Alberti. Waldegg-Pyrmont was expelled and the Alberti papers showed that his—or rather Starhemberg's—section of the Heimwehr were conspiring with the German Government to make a Putsch against Dollfuss within a couple of days. Once again all public buildings were garrisoned by police in readiness for a Nazi move.



The Innsbruck Chamber of Commerce asked, in a violently anti-Dollfuss and pro-German resolution which was kept out of the Press, for surrender to Nazi demands, but this and other proofs of Nazi strength did nothing to deter Dollfuss and the Heimwehr from hastening down the Gadarene slope of counter-revolution against the Socialists.

“The Socialist Party would not hesitate to-day to give the fullest support to a democratic Government in suppressing Nazi terrorism”, wrote the official Party organ, the *Arbeiterzeitung*, on January 19th, in an editorial urging the Government to drop the hopeless “two-front war” and accept Social-Democratic co-operation in destroying the Nazi peril once and for all. “By rallying the democratic forces of the country and by making Austria the home of the vanished civilisation and liberties of the German race, the Government could instantaneously end the uncertain conditions of recent months.” The paucity of Dollfuss’ support encouraged the Nazis to the worst excesses because of their certainty that the criminals of the moment would soon be richly rewarded heroes and martyrs, warned the paper, while the Government’s wage-cutting and anti-social policy was creating a steady stream of recruits for the Nazis among the wage-earning classes. The warning went unheeded, like so many others.

On January 11th there was a little-noticed dress rehearsal for the coming hangings of Socialist leaders. Dr. Dollfuss had restored the death penalty, abolished at the Revolution, nominally in order to hold it as a threat over Nazi bomb-throwers; as I have already noted, no Nazi suffered from it until after the murder of Dollfuss. There is little doubt that the change was really made to over-awe the Socialists and any ideas of resistance they might have. In addition to explosives crimes, the penalty was made to apply to murder and arson. In December the first case in sixteen years where a man’s life was in danger came before the courts. It was that of a particularly brutal murder of a girl by the son of a well-to-do farmer. President Miklas pardoned the criminal. Now, on January 11th, it was a penniless, half-witted tramp, Peter Strauss, whose neck was at stake because he had set fire to the haystack of a farmer who had refused him alms. The man had been declared mentally deficient by the courts in another case, but the Heimwehr were insistent that he must be hanged. The crime had



been committed only four days before the trial, and there was little evidence but his own confession. His lawyer pointed out that the man's intelligence was of such a low order that he could hardly have grasped the fact that he was risking his life under the martial-law proclamation by setting fire to the haystack with his pocket lighter. But a primitive peasantry often attaches far more value to property than to human life, and it was the peasantry on whom Dollfuss relied for his support. At 12.10 Peter Strauss, wringing his hands and begging for his life, was sentenced to death. The prison chaplain telegraphed an appeal for mercy to President Miklas. The court graciously granted the man one hour beyond the allotted two to prepare for death, and at 3.30, murmuring plaintively, "So many murderers have gone free and I must hang for a haystack", Strauss was strung up in the centre of a hollow square of troops. Curiously enough, this obscure, half-witted Austrian's execution followed immediately on the execution of a world-famous imbecile for a similar crime. Twenty-four hours before the Nazis had guillotined Van der Lubbe.

The visit of Mussolini's emissary, Signor Suvich, to Vienna on January 19th in order to settle the last details of the plot against the Socialists, was made the signal for violent demonstrations again by the Vienna Nazis. The whole Ringstrasse was filled with police, and several cordons guarded the Inner City. My flat in that Habsburgergasse was little more than a stone's throw from that of the Chancellor in the Stallburggasse. To reach home for lunch through the tremendous police guards after witnessing the Nazi violence which resulted in a couple of thousand arrests, was like getting through to a beleaguered city. In the evening bombs were detonated, despite all police vigilance, near the Burgtheater, where Dollfuss was entertaining his guest, and there were many truncheon charges.

Speaking in the name of the Duce, Suvich used one or two interesting phrases. He said that Austria "should be guaranteed normal conditions for an independent existence". Referring to Dollfuss' visit to Riccione the previous summer, when Mussolini had insisted on the necessity for the triumph of Fascism in Austria, the Austrian official communique said that Suvich's visit had confirmed the policy discussed at Riccione for "the remoulding" of Austria. The *Arbeiterzeitung* was confiscated for reprinting a notice from a back issue of the

Austrian Official Gazette recalling that Suvich, an Austrian subject at the time, had fought against Austria in the War. A speech by Dollfuss establishing Germany's complicity in the supplying of bombs and explosives to the Austrian Nazis was broadcast in pamphlet form. Motor lorries full of Heimwehr with machine-guns toured the city, threatening to fire on demonstrators against Suvich. On January 23rd an Austrian note was handed to von Neurath in Berlin, saying that unless Nazi Germany ceased interference in Austria's internal affairs, she would bring the matter before the League. Simultaneously with this blow to the Right, Dollfuss struck at the Left by prohibiting the street sale of the *Arbeiterzeitung* for two months. The Heimwehr official organ demanded again the elimination of the Socialist Party and the trades unions. Dollfuss became daily a closer prisoner of the Heimwehr and the Nazis jeered: "Dollfuss is sitting on bayonets, and the bayonets are not his own". Britain and France advised Austria not to press her protests against Germany with the League. This attitude produced dismay among Dollfuss' supporters, and Starhemberg in a speech to the Heimwehr offered to Hitler terms for a settlement which would guarantee the establishment of Fascism in Austria. "Hitler", he said, "must recognise in writing that the Heimwehr alone are entitled to promulgate Fascism in Austria and must acknowledge Austria's independence. I will negotiate only with Hitler himself or his duly authorised representative. I would then define how we would support his foreign policy." The offer, of course, was ignored.

And now the hour was at hand to settle accounts with the Vienna workers. I have before me a copy of a circular letter dated January 27th, 1934, issued to members of Starhemberg's Third Jaeger Battalion of the Heimwehr, signed by its Commandant. It began: "The Government has now agreed to force a decision under all conditions. In the next few days you will all be called upon for active service. In this decisive hour all true supporters of our ideas belong in the front line. You are to report on January 29th at 7.30 to be allotted to your new formation." The Heimwehr mobilisation was carried out throughout Austria on the day named.

Tyrol was selected for the Fascist *début*. On January 30th fully armed and mobilised Tyrolese Heimwehr battalions marched into Innsbruck, the provincial capital, and occupied

the public buildings, declaring that these would not be evacuated until the elected local government had resigned and been replaced by a government nominated by Fey (in which they were to have two seats), the Social-Democratic Party had been dissolved and forbidden throughout Austria and a Heimwehr "Security Commissar" attached to the Governor of each province. Day after day throughout the ensuing week this manoeuvre was repeated in every provincial capital with the tolerance or connivance of the authorities, so that by Saturday the Heimwehr, except in Vienna, had carried through a "cold Putsch". Dollfuss summoned provincial Governors to Vienna to discuss the situation. Fearing a compromise with the democratic forces at the eleventh hour, Fey pushed on to still more provocative actions. In the Viennese suburb of Schwechat he raided the former Republican Defence Corps headquarters for arms and arrested the two chiefs of staff of this dissolved body, Major Alexander Eifler and Captain Rudolf Loew. (In March 1938 the Nazis sent Eifler to share with his former Clerical persecutors the horrors of Dachau.)

In the provinces, where the Heimwehr Fascists had usurped power, the workers were burning to meet force with force. In the capital the Party Central Committee of the Socialists still sought desperately to reach a compromise with Dollfuss. In the last sitting it was to hold, in the middle of January, the Committee made him a final offer, which was curtly rejected. In the Lower Austrian Diet the Socialist leader Schneidmadl gave a last warning to the Government. Dollfuss, he said, was being betrayed by Starhemberg, who had authorised Count Alberti to negotiate with the Nazis; the police had suppressed the written proofs of this which were in their hands. The genuineness of Dollfuss' own fight for Austrian independence was in doubt, for he had authorised the notorious Habicht to come from Berlin to negotiate with him and only ordered back his airplane when it was actually over Austria, because the Nazis had broken the temporary truce. Starhemberg and other Heimwehr leaders were only too anxious to come to a working arrangement with the Nazis. Italy was insisting on the immediate establishment of Fascism in Austria. The workers had arms, legally acquired years before with the consent of the Government and since concealed. Schneidmadl warned the Government that these would be used against

either a Heimwehr or a Nazi attempt to destroy the Constitution. The Socialist Party issued a leaflet (which was immediately confiscated) saying that they had had to put up with a very great deal, but that they would give the signal for general resistance throughout the country if the Government either

- (1) occupied the Vienna Rathaus;
- (2) suppressed the trades unions;
- (3) ordered the dissolution of the Party;
- (4) suppressed the workers' press.

One day just before the end my friend Oscar Pollak, editor of the *Arbeiterzeitung*, asked me to come and see him. He was very grave. "I asked you to come to-day," he said, "not as a journalist, but as a personal friend. The news I have for you, you must not publish. The Party Committee wants the advice of a competent employee of foreign capitalist newspapers, who can be trusted to keep his mouth shut. I suggested your name.

"The point is this. We have definite proofs that Dollfuss and the Heimwehr have decided to make a counter-revolutionary putsch by force of arms within the next four weeks. We shall fight in the defence of the Republic—that is decided. But if we wait for the Government to choose their hour to strike at us, we shall be at a grave disadvantage. We want to know from you what sort of press we shall get in the capitalist papers generally (apart from the extreme reactionary organs) of Great Britain and America, if we decide to strike before the Government have completed their plans. You know the situation well enough to realise that even if we do, not we but the Fascists will be the aggressors—it will be a purely defensive measure on our part. Will the Anglo-Saxon capitalist Press recognise this?" After thinking for a moment, I told him:

"No; in my opinion if you strike first, whatever the provocation and whatever the facts, except for the Socialist Press and perhaps one or two Liberal and moderate Conservative organs, you will be depicted as 'bloodthirsty revolutionaries' who are stabbing in the back Austria's 'gallant little Chancellor' at the most critical moment of his fight to preserve Austrian liberties. Of course I may be wrong, and the judgment given on such action will naturally vary in different newspaper offices."

"That is very sad news," replied Pollak, who had lived a

good deal in England, "but it only corresponds to what I felt myself. Thank you. I shall report to the Party. You must not ask me to tell you later what decision has been taken and you must forget this talk." I have done so until now when, with my friend Pollak in safety and those against whom his Party contemplated taking action themselves in exile, in prison or dead, it is safe and perhaps has slight historic interest to record it.

Possibly the most damning evidence of the deliberate preparations for civil war on the part of the Government is that obligingly furnished by Major Fey himself on the day before the coup, Sunday, February 11th. During the preceding week, thanks to the revelations of a Socialist traitor, Eduard Koerbel, the Government had arrested a great many of the underground leaders of the Republican Defence Corps who alone knew where that body's arms were buried or bricked up. Four days before the coup Dollfuss went to Budapest and received his last orders from Mussolini via Suvich, who met him there. He returned to Vienna on the Saturday and saw Fey. On the Sunday, the day before the fighting began, Fey addressed a great Heimwehr parade and told his followers:—

"I have seen Dollfuss, and I can tell you quite definitely that he is now our man. To-morrow we start to clean up and we shall make a full job of it." As a last preparation, Fey quite illegally deprived Karl Seitz, the leader of the Socialist Party, of the control which, as Burgomaster and Governor of Vienna, he exercised over the police of the capital, and nominated a Security Commissar in his place. Dollfuss declared in the Press that he welcomed the action of the Heimwehr in seizing power in the provinces as a big step towards his own programme for getting rid of Parliament and the Parties. On Monday, February 12th, the storm broke.

## CHAPTER IX

### DOLLFUSS DESTROYS AUSTRIA

CROSSING THE RINGSTRASSE NEAR THE UNIVERSITY AT 11 a.m. on February 12th, I noticed a long string of tram-cars standing idle. Knowing how tense the situation was and remembering July 15th, 1927, I scented big trouble. I went up to four or five drivers and conductors who were talking together. They became silent as I approached, but when I addressed them with the Party salutation of "*Genossen*", it was all right. "What has happened, Comrades?" I asked. "Is this a strike or a breakdown?"

"We don't quite know—that's the worst of it," they told me. "We know that the Fascists have been shooting at our comrades in Linz, that there is a general strike there, and some say the Government are firing on the workers there with artillery. Here, power had been suddenly cut off from the central station, but whether this is an accident, Nazi sabotage or the signal for a general strike, we don't know yet. But if it is true that the Government are using troops against our comrades in Linz, then, of course, it will be a general strike and civil war."

I jumped into a taxi and drove hell for leather to Party headquarters in the building of the *Arbeiterzeitung*. Before the doors stood two police in their ordinary "peace-time equipment", as they had stood ever since the last of several raids on this building during the preceding week. Nevertheless, something big was up. The great entrance doors had been flung to, and behind the closed ground-floor windows anxious faces peered out. The two policemen stared at me as I pounded on the door, but said nothing. The door was on the chain and was opened only a couple of inches for parley. I demanded Oscar Pollak. After some discussion the door was opened just wide enough to let me slip through, then bolted and barred again. The atmosphere inside was like that which obtains in the afternoon of some stifling sultry July or August day when the skies have blackened with thunder-clouds, the whole air is charged with electricity

and one awaits from second to second the discharge of the first flash and thunder-clap. I hurried through the dozen or so youthful Republican Defence Corps men, dashed up the stairs and ran along the deserted corridors to Oscar Pollak's room. He was changing from his office coat into a grey-green tunic as I entered, and clearly had not a minute to spare.

"For Christ's sake, what's up?" I asked him. "Is there a strike on or not? Is it serious or just a demonstration? Have you hit out or are you being attacked?"

"It's deadly serious," he said, the invariable friendly smile for once completely banished from his features. "This morning the Government and the Heimwehr started on that 'big clean-up' of our Party which Fey promised yesterday. They sent police and detectives to raid the workers' club in Linz in search of Republican Defence Corps arms. Bernaschek, the Linz Defence Corps Leader, locked them in a cellar and gave the order to resist. Police reinforcements attacked the building and our people returned the fire. Dollfuss has given Fey a free hand and he is raving for the blood of the workers." His voice shook with the horror of what he was relating as he went on: "They turned massed artillery to blast our fellows out of the Linz workers' club. There's a general strike in Vienna and throughout Austria."

"But good God, man," I told him, "what kind of general strike is this, when your own municipal tramway workers don't know what's up? I've just spoken to some of them on the Ringstrasse, and they are bewildered."

"I know, I know, *leider*," said Pollak. "Dollfuss and Fey have undermined the whole organisation by the recent arrests of our key men, betrayed by the traitor Koerbel. Our couriers are trying to spread the news, and now in the dinner hour I hope everybody will learn that it is a general strike."

"And the Schutzbund?" I asked. "They will fight?"

"Naturally. Now we have our backs against the wall. You remember our talk? Well, we did nothing—we could not face the responsibility of causing bloodshed by striking first. Now the Government have got us pretty well where they wanted us, but they will have a tough job. We have still a chance to save the Republic. But it's war to the finish, with the motto, 'Peace with any other Government, except that of Dollfuss and Fey, which will restore democracy in Austria'." As he spoke he



hurriedly wrung my hands and said: "You're in great danger here—we expect the police to storm the building any minute. There is no time for another word. I must dash for the back entrance—come with me or not as you please." And he was gone.

I hurried downstairs and came out from the deserted building through the front entrance. I found a long line of police drawn up with steel-helmets and rifles, and was immediately ordered to stand where I was—just in front of the police line—or I would be shot. The officer gave the order to load with live rounds, and as the clips were rammed home I could appreciate something of the sensations of the star figure at a dawn firing-party. One of the drivers of the police lorries had been watching me, and now murmured: "Foreign journalist? Walk off quietly round the street corner—they are much too strung up to notice you, if you keep calm and ignore them." I took his advice, and was soon in a taxi making for the centre of the town again. Everywhere were police, Heimwehr and troops in war-kit with machine-guns and rifles. The whole normal life of the city had been brought to a standstill by the general strike. On the walls men were pasting up a Government poster.

"In Vienna part of the Social-Democratic workers of the municipal power-station have struck work. Because of this martial law has been proclaimed in Vienna." Queer logic, I thought, martial law in the capital because part of the workers in one department are on strike, but the Government could hardly afford the truth, and I supposed that even this excuse was better than none for putting at last their plans into effect. Curiously enough, there was a general strike in France the same day and serious collisions between strikers and the authorities, but martial law was not put into force. As I crossed the Ringstrasse I saw that the Rathaus was surrounded and invaded by police. Inside, Heimwehr men had ordered Karl Seitz to hand over his agenda to one of their officers. Seitz, who was often accused by his enemies of a sneaking fondness for the limelight, played his part well this day, although Heimwehr censorship had turned off the limes and the audience was only Heimwehr and the police.

"Clear out of my Rathaus immediately," the frail old gentleman said. "I am the legally elected Burgomaster of this city and I yield to no threats, only to force."

The latter was promptly applied and Seitz, together with all



the Social-Democratic city councillors the Heimwehr and police could catch, was dragged off to prison. Still not a shot had fallen. But all around the Ringstrasse troops were constructing barbed-wire entanglements, putting out knife-rests and bringing machine-guns to bear on all the arterial and minor roads leading into the Inner City from the outer suburbs. Police and Heimwehr tried to force their way into the great blocks of municipal dwelling-houses, which the Socialists had built right around the city in the outer suburbs, firing wherever admission was refused. Frantically the Republican Defence Corps were searching for their hidden arms, and, where they found them, using them to defend their homes. In Ottakring, Floridsdorf, Favoriten and other workers' districts the great gates of the dwelling-houses were barred and barricaded and here and there uniformed Defence Corps men posted machine-guns, while others constructed hasty street barricades from the galvanised rubbish bins. In many cases the arms could not be discovered, as the key men had been arrested before they could pass on the secret to some deputy. In one great dwelling-block, the Engel-Hof, the tenants dug frantically in the courtyards and hammered walls all night, the women tearing up the gardens with their nails while the men dug with the few spades available, searching for their arms. But they found nothing, and the building was occupied without the tenants being able to fire a shot in self-defence. In other buildings—the Karl Marx-Hof, the *Arbeiterheim* in Ottakring, the beautiful sun-bathed workers' garden-city block of Sandleiten—someone knew where the arms were bricked up, and they were hurriedly issued. I heard sporadic shooting already at about 4 o'clock, and by 6 p.m. the deadly tattoo of rapid machine-gun fire came from all parts of the outer suburbs. Not only the trams but also all taxis had ceased to run. In convoying someone to safety past some of the districts where fighting had started at about seven, I had to go on foot, and found it almost impossible to get back to my office in the Inner City. Excitable Heimwehr irregulars and even police officers refused at one point after another to recognise my police press pass, and it looked as though I was going to be left in the most tantalising situation of all for a newspaper-man—being at the heart of a great story and cut off from all means of transmitting it. After an hour of scuttling up and down the cordon round the Inner City like a rat trying to get through close-meshed wire

netting, I found a gap and half-slipped, half-bluffed my way through. It must have been about 10 o'clock that the intermittent sound of dulled explosions came from the outer suburbs. I was walking along the Ringstrasse with a colleague, an Austro-Hungarian, and a distinguished American visiting journalist. "Good God!" I said, "that sounds like howitzers or trench mortars. But they can't do that—Dollfuss couldn't—not even Fey—turn the guns onto those houses packed with women and children as well as the workers. However determined the armed resistance, the Government and the Heimwehr have it in their hands to starve them into submission in a couple of days, by cutting off light, gas and water and letting no food through."

My Viennese colleague scoffed at the idea of shell-fire and told the visitor the old story of how everything (including civil war) in Vienna might be hopeless, but could never be serious. But within an hour there was no longer any question of it. Howitzers, machine-guns and trench mortars were raining death onto the buildings of which Karl Seitz had said in opening one of the finest a year or so before: "Long after we are gone, these stones will speak for us and for Socialism". To-day, even, they speak still for something more—for the meaning of Fascism. The gaping holes torn by shells, the scars made by machine-gun bullets have long been repaired and the shell-shattered wreckage of what was once the great workers' club in Ottakring carted away. But if you care to ignore all the invisible horrors and visit what Vienna has become, and should be driving out by taxi to bathe at the pleasant island of Gaensehaeufel, tell your chauffeur to stop a minute by the Goethe-Hof and have a look at the walls, particularly from inside the courtyard. Unless the Nazis have already worked some constructional miracle, you will see a lot of square patches where the plastering is a little lighter than the main surface. These patches conceal what Fascism did to Socialist achievement in February 1934. Then, perhaps, you will remember that Fascism is the international form which reactionary capitalism has employed everywhere when it proved impossible to deprive the masses by other means of power which they had legally obtained at parliamentary elections. If so, you may determine that at all times and in all places you will have to do your part to see that no one shall ever have a chance of reversing any verdict of the polls by these gangster methods in your own country. If that should be how

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you come to feel about it, study the history of the very slow and gradual undermining of the power of the Austrian workers which was determinedly carried on underground for so many years under the mask of protecting society against the completely non-existent danger of "Red revolution".

The anti-Nazi Clerical apologists of Dr. Dollfuss and Dr. Schuschnigg do not to-day any longer try to show them—particularly the former—as having followed the right line with the Socialists, but are eager to make out that the Socialists made the bigger mistakes. Their particular scapegoat is Otto Bauer, who died in exile in Paris at the beginning of July 1938 at the early age of fifty-seven, and was mourned not only by the whole Second (Social-Democratic) International, but even by his life-long opponents the Austrian Communist Party, who sent a wreath and a deputation. Otto Bauer made mistakes indeed, to which the workers' affection for Bauer personally did not blind them. The mistakes for which the workers held him responsible, however, were just the reverse of those sins of omission and commission for which the unctuous friends of Dollfuss condemn him. The latter blamed Bauer for not having at all costs allied the workers with the Clericals or Clerico-Fascists against the Nazis. After 1934, the workers said that Bauer's greatest fault lay in not calling them out earlier against the reactionary measures of the Government. Dollfuss' apologists say that in face of the Nazi peril, Bauer should have acquiesced in Dollfuss' attack on Parliament and democracy in 1933. It is quite untrue that Bauer was actuated by a formalistic democracy which made him insist on the full extension of democratic privilege to the Nazis, even though it would mean his own destruction. On the contrary, he frequently laid down that those who had sworn the destruction of democracy should not be allowed to use that institution to such an end. It was in the famous "Chess Editorial" in the *Arbeiterzeitung* that the axiom was formulated that it was no violation of democratic principles to exclude the Nazis—and all other Fascists—from their protection. Democracy was depicted as a game of chess played according to a set of rules, of which the first was that after winning a game and obtaining power, you had to give your defeated opponent the chance of trying to beat you by the same means through which you vanquished him—securing the approval of the majority. But when a player turned up who said, "I don't believe in the

game or its rules, but I am going to take part in it until I win. Then I shall kick over the chess-board, burn the pieces, guillotine or imprison my enemy and declare it high treason ever to play chess again"—to allow such a man to join in the game and give him the protection of its rules would be suicide. This was the principle which Bauer and the Social-Democrats wanted to see adopted in dealing with the Nazis and their claim to use the democratic system for its own destruction. It is the principle which Czechoslovakia long applied with brilliant success to maintain full democracy but exclude the Nazis from its benefits. Those, Czechoslovakia ruled, who have sworn to destroy democracy and Parliament will not be allowed to put up candidates for election to the institution they would destroy, nor to enjoy freedom to attack existing institutions which they would deny to others once they secured power. But Dollfuss, pointing excitedly at the Nazi danger, tried to exploit it, to make everybody play a game invented by himself where he alone was allowed to win—a game suspiciously like that which the Nazis wanted to play. True, Dollfuss said that one day he might again allow some kind of limited democratic chess to be played according to rules which he might devise later. But it would have been little less suicidal for democrats to have trusted him in that than to let the Nazis themselves join in the game.

Otto Bauer wrote in 1933: "Nazism has more power to attract the masses than has the present Government; to this extent it is the more dangerous enemy. But it is the Government, not the Nazis, which controls the armed forces of the State; to this extent the Government is more dangerous to us. Let us beware lest our enmity to the Nazis betrays us into supporting a bourgeois dictatorship of the present rulers." Even after the horrors of February 1934, the illegal *Arbeiterzeitung*, the distribution of which was often rewarded by the Government with five years' imprisonment, tirelessly warned the workers that they must never let their hatred of Dollfuss betray them for a moment into co-operation with the worst enemy, Adolf Hitler. Three days after the guns had ceased to fire on the Socialist houses, on February 17th, 1934, the *Daily Mail* published a declaration of Hitler in which he said:

"I am convinced that the Austrian workers will stand now behind the Nazi cause as a natural reaction to the violence which the Austrian Government has used against them."

It only showed how little Adolf Hitler understood the spirit of the Austrian workers and the scientific education in Socialism and the doctrines of the class war which their leaders had given them for years. This education Otto Bauer continued from exile, incidentally to the advantage of the Government which had set a price on his head. But both before and after February the Socialists contended—as the example of Czechoslovakia established until the Munich Powers destroyed her power to resist—that democratic law-giving, ruthlessly applied to terroristic criminals, was amply sufficient to deal with the Nazi menace without any violation of democracy. Much play has been made with the so-called “offers” of Dollfuss to the workers as his difficulties with the Nazis increased. Impartial examination of these reveals them as differing little, if at all, from the usual Nazi-Fascist methods of seeking to destroy the hold of the workers’ leaders in order to incorporate the helpless and leaderless masses in their own militarised movements, and there subject them to a combination of barrack-square or even prison discipline with childish rewards for complete submission.

One of the last efforts made by Dollfuss to get his way by these methods without proceeding to the violence which, as we have seen, had long been planned, was made in a speech on January 18th, 1934, when he asked those whom he called “honourable workers’ leaders”—that is, those who were willing to betray democracy and the interests of their class—to co-operate with him in defending Austrian independence “in the building up of a new Austria”. What this new Austria was to be, we have heard in Chapter VII from Dollfuss’ own mouth—the democratic Parliament destroyed for ever, Socialist influence dead for ever—“I announce the death of Parliament”. Was this a programme in which “honourable workers’ leaders” could ask the Socialist millions to co-operate? Nevertheless, the Party leadership was anything but blind to the gravity of the Nazi danger, and summoned a meeting on January 20th to consider whether there was any possibility of devising common ground on which the workers could stand beside Dollfuss against the high-pressure Nazi terrorism. Before this meeting could even take place, Dollfuss and Fey rendered all prospects of agreement illusory by forbidding the sale of the beloved organ of the masses, the *Arbeiterzeitung*.

Dollfuss apologists say that Bauer left the workers without

any indication as to when, if ever, they were to draw the line at tame submission to Clerical Fascist aggression. This again is quite untrue; the workers knew very well what were the four points fixed as limits to which I referred in Chapter VIII, page 99. It is true, however, that the undermining of the Socialist position was so skilfully carried out from March 1933 onwards by Dollfuss that it was extremely hard to fix definite limits of aggression which the masses could clearly comprehend as affecting interests of theirs so vital that it was better to face the risk of bloodshed rather than acquiesce further. It has lately been said that in view of Dollfuss' nervousness when he suppressed Parliament, a great protest demonstration of the workers in the streets of Vienna might have made him change his mind. That hypothesis is too silly to discuss; it could only have led to a combination of July 15th, 1927, and February 12th, 1934. What both Communists and Socialists now realise to be true is that the great tactical mistake of Otto Bauer was not to have called out the armed Schutzbund and the masses, declaring a general strike in defence of Parliament on the day of its suppression. But for his reluctance to face inevitable bloodshed on that occasion, it is hardly for supporters of bourgeois reaction to blame him, however grave the charges which Left revolutionaries might bring against him on this score. The same applies to the other tactical opportunities to strike missed by Bauer—the one-sided suppression of the Schutzbund while the equally illegal Heimwehr were not only untouched but strengthened, and the destruction of that valuable post-war institution, the Chambers of Labour. The gravamen of the charges which the Left can bring against Bauer is that he proved himself a peace-at-almost-any-price man, while Dollfuss and the Fascists were tireless in finding always a fresh provocation to make the workers take up their arms when they failed to react to the last. To the end the Socialist leaders resisted Fascist encroachments by every means short of violence. When the reactionary Governor of Tyrol dissolved the Republican Defence Corps there in March 1932, Karl Seitz as Governor of the Province of Vienna decreed the dissolution of the Heimwehr in Vienna. The same day the Government cancelled his order, not only allowing that of the Governor of Tyrol to stand, but extending the prohibition of the Schutzbund to the whole of Austria.

Here is a voice from Dollfuss' own camp which condemns him.



Three days before he and Fey struck, Leopold Kunschak, leader of the Catholic Workers' Movement and a strong supporter of Dollfuss, said in the Vienna Diet: "The real enemy of our country and of that individualism which it is the historic mission of Germany to preach, is the distortion of the German spirit by Nazism. It is the urgent need of the hour to combine even heterogeneous elements in opposition to this. God grant that the divergence of spirit and soul among our people and their leaders may stop before people and country stand weeping at gravesides. Let us stand shoulder to shoulder to-day with those otherwise separated from us by a world of differences." This moving appeal from the old Catholic working-man to the Government to refrain from the fatal step against the Socialists which he knew was pending, fell on completely deaf ears. A week later the mourning at the Austrian gravesides of the victims of political tyranny had begun. It continues to-day at the gravesides of the thousands of Jews and others driven into suicide by the mediæval barbarism of the Nazi regime.

The record of these three days of bloodshed in Vienna and the provinces deserves a book to itself. Here a few snapshots must suffice. In the Reumann-Hof, steel-helmeted police broke in on the afternoon of February 12th, beating up the workers with their truncheons and trying to drive them out of the building. When the women appeared crying at the windows the police shouted, "Back from the windows, or we shoot", and at the same moment the first shot fell—whether from the police or the Defence Corps, who can say? Heimwehr and troops were brought up and a hellish machine-gun fire opened, under cover of which the police stormed this great human rabbit-warren, fighting their way against bitter resistance from corridor to corridor and from floor to floor. This was the first workers' house to fall. Everywhere where they could find the arms the Defence Corps men in other buildings defended them until their ammunition ran out. In many places the Government had to employ armoured cars and whippet tanks to break down the defences. In the Liebknecht-Hof they effected an entrance by other methods. A Red-Cross ambulance drove up to the gates and was allowed through by the Defence Corps guard. Inside the courtyard the doors of the ambulance were flung open and a crowd of steel-helmeted police with rifles and a machine-gun sprang out and opened fire at the defenders from the rear. The



police were driven out by the defenders with heavy loss and the Red-Cross car remained as evidence of the tactics employed. Out on the Laaberg, Defence Corps men built up a fine defensive position with barricades and regular trenches dug across the fields between the blocks of houses, and garrisoned the trenches with 2000 armed men. Five battalions of the regular army, in addition to Heimwehr and police, were employed to capture this strategic position. Ill-clad, ill-shod and almost without food and water, these 2000 defended their homes throughout the bitter cold of three February days and nights. Afterwards the Commander of the whole Schutzbund, Julius Deutsch, told me in exile how throughout the fighting, despite the desperate need of his men, there had not been one single case of plundering, even of a foodshop or boot store. This the Government admitted. On repeating these words of Deutsch at a luncheon-party once to a certain diplomat with some personal experience of revolutions abroad, I heard his comment in broken German :

“ That is very nice, to be able to say that throughout the resistance to a brutal counter-revolution my men always behaved like perfect gentlemen. But had I been in command, I would rather have been able to say that my men had behaved like scientific revolutionaries. Very pretty, that nobody plundered—that enabled the counter-revolution to throw the whole weight of police, troops and Heimwehr against the defenders of the Republic. But if those not organised or armed for fighting had started to revenge themselves for this attack on their liberties by breaking open shops, I think things might have been different. If every minute and from every quarter of the city had come a telephone call to the Chancellor : ‘ Mr. Dollfuss, they are stealing my shoes—Mr. Dollfuss, send police, they are stealing my cheese—Mr. Dollfuss, quick with the police—bad men are stealing my motor-car ’—well, my men would not have been quite such gentlemen, but police would have been running here, running there, and back again to arrest plunderers, and my poor troops would have had a chance to defend themselves against less terrible odds. But there, these Viennese could never make a revolution. Please do tell me—is that true what I have heard, that at Floridsdorf station the Defence Corps would not go on the platform to defend it because there was no one to issue them platform tickets? And please, is that true that in a park in Favoriten a Defence Corps detachment surrendered

on the orders of their leader because otherwise to withdraw from the advancing Heimwehr they would have had to walk across the grass, which was labelled, '*Betreten verboten*'? "

To this criticism of Julius Deutsch—who, like Kurt von Schuschnigg, had been a very gallant artillery officer in the Austro-Hungarian Imperial army during the War—might be added from a revolutionary standpoint one of Deutsch's purely defensive tactics, which from a standpoint of humanity can only be praised. Incidentally these tactics prove once again that February 1934 was not a Socialist revolution, but a Heimwehr counter-revolution. I have seen attempted and successful revolutions enough in post-war Europe to know that the first objective of revolutionaries must be to seize public buildings, telegraph and telephone offices, broadcasting centres, posts to command arterial roads and the railway stations. These objectives the Nazis attacked in July 1934 and secured in March 1938. The same points the Heimwehr seized or attempted to seize in the week before February 12th, and fully secured with co-operation of police and regular army on that day. From start to finish the Socialists made no attempt in this direction. As their enemies admit, they restricted themselves to barricading and defending with arms the municipal dwelling-houses.

That terrible night of February 12th to 13th gave me a big story as a newspaper-man. It did something else for me. It resolved any lingering doubts I might have had as to where I had to take my stand if in my own country the cruel and treacherous beast which is Fascism should ever show signs of baring its teeth. Already it seems to be sharpening stealthily its claws.

By about 2 or 3 a.m. I had sent all that was to be sent in the way of a story, and I was deadly tired. But I could not sleep. That thud, thud, thud of shells dropping into the houses packed with workers and their families never stopped. It was too muffled to have interfered with sleep had one been able to ignore the hellish work that it implied. Six years before, on the pleasant shores of the Wörthersee, a retired Austrian General whom I knew well had said to me: "One day we are going to stop that business in Vienna by fair means or foul. Parquet floors and shower-baths for workers, indeed—you might as well put Persian carpets in a pigsty and feed the sow on caviar." Well, that business in Vienna was being stopped this night, and the means did not seem to me particularly fair. It was not

really the slaughter which made such an indelible impression on my mind, for I had seen slaughter myself more than once. What I could not forget throughout that night of horror was that I was forced to be present at the ruthless destruction by unintelligent, unimaginative selfishness of a great and world-recognised example of what could be done by devoted idealists and scientific reformers to give to the great masses of my fellow-beings something of the good things in life which I demanded for myself—clean homes, sunshine, pure air, a glimpse of green from at least some of their windows, decent sanitation and simple opportunities of personal cleanliness, a corner of safety from traffic for the children to play in, medical attention in cases of emergency. And all this not as charity for which the recipient had to show humble and respectful gratitude, but as something which it was the recognised duty of the community to provide, even at the cost of a little less superabundant luxury and unconsumable wealth for the small class of the very rich. And now these fair dream-cities, with their promise for the whole world, which had grown up out of the jungle of slumdom, dirt and dependence, were being trampled back into the jungle again by beasts who would not tolerate their existence.

By dawn I was already dressed and besieging police headquarters for a permit to pass through the fighting lines to the scenes of destruction. The worst shelling had been in Ottakring, and there with my colleague I presented myself to the Heimwehr commander, who was all aglow with victory. After all-night shelling personally directed by Major Fey himself, the Workers' Club had just been stormed. The Heimwehr leader gave me a guide to enable me to enter the building. Nowhere else in Vienna did I later find anything quite like this. Ingenious Government propagandists later tried to utilise the fact of a number of "duds" having been left sticking in the wall of some houses, to start a theory that the Government had had the fuses removed from the shells to minimise the damage. The collection of fuses which I picked up myself amidst the ruins, together with the picture postcards of the destruction which the triumphant Fascists were fools enough to put on sale throughout Austria until someone recognised the stupidity and called them in three weeks later, refutes this entirely. The building was as shell-shattered and bullet-scarred as anything I had seen in Arras or Albert in 1916. In the courtyard in one window was hanging

the body of a Socialist city councillor, who had lost his reason towards the end of that night of horror and committed suicide. The wife of another councillor was in the hands of the police as a prisoner—raving mad. She died soon after. But most of the defenders had gone down into the sewers from the interior of the building and escaped. For long afterwards the sewers were the refuge of the defeated Socialists. Even badly wounded men were kept here for weeks, being moved from time to time when danger of arrest arose, and tended by devoted doctors, mostly Jewish, at the risk of their careers. One day a young Englishman whom I knew slightly came in to my flat and demanded a suit of clothes to enable a wounded Socialist to get out of the country. I opened my wardrobe to select something. When he saw several suits hanging there he cried: "Good God, man—one suit, and you have seven! I must have five—I have six wounded friends in the sewers in danger of the gallows." What could I say? He took the suits. The use of the sewers explains "the Miracle of the Karl Marx-Hof", which was three times captured and occupied by police and Heimwehr, only for the firing to recommence the moment the victorious garrisons withdrew.

Many parts of Ottakring were still holding out that morning, and at one moment I turned a corner and found myself covered by police rifles which were firing on a workers' block, and had to put up my hands and go back. No one knew where the "line" stood, what houses had been subdued and what still held out. A couple of hundred yards from the fighting zone stood thousands of workers, sullen, embittered, angry, but without leaders or leadership. Subsequently, in the ensuing self-criticism, the Party greatly blamed themselves for this situation having arisen. They said that they should have kept alive a revolutionary feeling amongst the whole working class and have made each man and woman a potential defender of the Party. Then, when the moment came, there would have been spontaneous mass defence. Instead of that, the Party had become like a country with a professional army. Its members looked on the Schutzbund as the people whose duty it was to go into battle if necessary and defend them. As at the beginning of, say, the South African War in Britain, the masses admired and cheered on their "gallant defenders", but saw no need to join their ranks. The other great reason for the final defeat the Party afterwards found in the failure of the general-strike weapon.

Intimidated by the economic victimisation which had followed the railway strike of a year before, the railwaymen only responded in part to the call, thus facilitating the work of the Heimwehr in bringing up their reinforcements to Vienna. I actually came across a number of cases where men in the tenement dwellings feared the consequences to their wives and families of striking and went every day to work, returning at night to their local Schutzbund commander, drawing their rifles and risking their lives in the firing line until at dawn they handed the rifles back, doffed their uniforms and dragged themselves wearily to work again.

That same afternoon I was in Floridsdorf with the Heimwehr when my Heimwehr guide was shot in the knee, my taxi commandeered, and I had to drive back with him to hospital. He showed a complete lack of enthusiasm for the fight, but said that they had been told in his village that the "Bolshevists" had seized Vienna and were marching through the countryside burning every village they reached; the Heimwehr had to rush towards Vienna to stop their march. He was puzzled to find my taxi taking him to the heart of the city, and asked if the "Bolshevists" had captured the hospital. Next day I stood by the howitzers as they poured their last shells into the Karl Marx-Hof, and saw the white flag go up as its little handful of defenders—not more than five hundred men, cornered finally at last—were driven out by Heimwehr, holding their hands above their strained faces, which showed white beneath the grime of battle.

Next day again I was watching the guns firing into a Floridsdorf group of buildings when a little figure in field grey with cloak and white falcon's feather in his *kepi* hurried up, accompanied by staff officers, who explained to him the damage done and where resistance might still be effected. It was little Dollfuss, looking strained and tense himself. My colleague asked him what he thought of the situation, and he told us, "I hope that they will soon see the uselessness of resistance in there and that this bloodshed will stop. We are winning all along the line, and it will soon be over."

On Thursday as I drove out through Favoriten to try to get through to the Socialist defenders of the Laerberg trenches, a military car in front of me stopped and a good-looking, elderly but erect officer got out. It was Prince Alois General von Schönburg-Hartenstein, the Minister of War and a great

monarchist. His trumpeter sounded a few notes, and workers and their wives ran from all directions to see what was up. The old man stood, quite alone save for the trumpeter, and unguarded, in their midst, and read out the proclamation of Dollfuss promising amnesty for all but the men's leaders, if they laid down their arms by midday. Then in a fatherly way he put the legal words into common language, speaking to his hearers in the broad Viennese dialect which they understood, telling them that he admired the courage of their husbands, but that it was all over now, and like good fellows they should accept defeat and surrender instantly, otherwise the penalties would be terrible. "Now, have you all understood, children?" the old soldier asked, and a few women murmured a puzzled affirmative. Thereupon Schönburg-Hartenstein drove off and repeated his action half a mile farther on. The fact that this soldier-aristocrat could venture quite alone to talk to those he was fighting spoke not only for his own courage but also for the complete falsity of the Government's propaganda which represented the other side as a mob of murderers and plunderers. Incidentally the promise of a general amnesty made by Schönburg-Hartenstein and Dollfuss was disregarded, as will be seen later.

When I reached the Laaerberg trenches I found them deserted. I turned back and drove straight across Vienna to the Goethe-Hof, where I discovered police and Heimwehr combing out the building for traces of the vanished defenders. The struggle was over. The amnesty offer had been broadcast on the radio at half-hour intervals throughout the night. The Schutzbund higher command, situated somewhere in the trenches among the gardens of Floridsdorf, had decided after full deliberation that it was useless to prolong the struggle. Those who might hope to benefit by the amnesty were ordered to collect the least usable of the weapons (while the best were again secreted) and hand them in as soon as the retreat of those had been covered for whom only the hangman's noose waited. Amongst the latter were Otto Bauer and Julius Deutsch, who the Government radio had been telling the workers at intervals for the preceding three days had "fled to Prague before a shot was fired with trunks full of money stolen from the Party". These two and a few more important leaders had been able to take part in the fighting because they had gone to ground in time when the Government had arrested most of the key men ten days before they struck.



Bauer and Deutsch had after that never slept at home, and indeed slept very little at all. The great problem of a political fugitive on the run is to find somewhere to lay his head safely each night. The police are watching the homes of everyone whom they know, all hotels, and all ways in and out of the city. Bauer and Deutsch solved the problem by getting such sleep as they could allow themselves by day in the comparative safety of darkened cinemas. That is the truth about the yarn that "Bauer watched Greta Garbo during the revolution". Conferences and staff discussions during the last few days were carried on in public swimming-baths and Turkish baths which the Socialist leaders themselves had built in the working-class areas. Here, too, hunted men could doze for a while in safety behind a thick curtain of steam.

On the Saturday, after the firing had stopped, I motored to Bratislava and found the two Socialist leaders well guarded against Fascist kidnappers by their Czechoslovak comrades. They both gave me very frank interviews for publication. Bauer told how, on the general-strike decision being taken, he went to his pre-arranged post in the battle line and ran the intelligence service until late on Tuesday night, when messenger after messenger sent out failed to return. Clad in engineers' blue overalls, Bauer moved about the city quite freely until on the Praterstern a man confronted him on the pavement and said: "You are Dr. Otto Bauer, the Red leader. I know you." Then, to Bauer's relief, the other put out his hand and said: "There are many of us outside the Socialist camp who deeply sympathise with you at this time". Bauer would not tell me how he escaped capture and death after the defeat, for fear of compromising others, but there is no harm in saying to-day that he was smuggled out as a wounded Heimwehr-man by a very distinguished Vienna surgeon. He gave me full details of the many previously unrevealed efforts of the Party to make peace with Dollfuss. Deutsch had been wounded just below the eye by a ricochet bullet and could speak openly of his gasping, panting struggle to reach safety alone, wounded and partially blinded, feeling his way through the woods and across the fields. Just before the frontier a Heimwehr patrol challenged him. Owing to the accident that he had several times spent his holidays in that very area, Deutsch was familiar with the local accent, and, playing the rôle of a drunken peasant which



admirably suited his blind and stumbling progress, he turned and roundly cursed the village Heimwehr in their own dialect. He was allowed to go on unimpeded. He and Bauer had no "trunks full of money"; they had escaped with just 110 Austrian Schilling between them. Their property in Vienna was, of course, immediately confiscated. Three years later I learned that devoted Party followers had cautiously bought back, a few volumes at a time, Bauer's immense library, and were dispatching it in discreetly small sections as a tribute of affection to the lonely exile in Bruenn. When I last saw him two years ago in Prague, Bauer was a broken but upright man who had lost everything but his ideals. "To-day, as on that Saturday in Bratislava," he said, "I feel that we could not have done otherwise than resist, although we knew that there was hardly a dog's chance of victory. German Social-Democracy struck its flag before the Nazis without firing a shot, and is finished for ever. We in Austria nailed our colours to the masthead and went down, holed through and through, with the tattered banner flying. That fighting tradition, the unforgettable names of our heroes, will help us one day somehow to resurrection. We of the old leadership can play no real part in that. It is for us now to be happy if here and there we can render the humblest service to the young men who are leading the underground movement in Vienna with such magnificent courage."

I returned from talking to Bauer and Deutsch the same evening to Vienna to attend a late Press Conference on the Ballhausplatz. A very high Foreign Office official—his name must not be given, for to-day he is one of the most pitiful victims of the sadistic cruelties of the masters of Dachau—began telling me the usual stuff about the courage of the misled rank and file and the treacherous cowardice of their leaders who had fled before a shot was fired. I pulled out of my pocket a still-damp print of Julius Deutsch with his bandaged eye, and showed it to him.

"Where did you get that?" he asked. I told him, and that I had seen Bauer and Deutsch not three hours earlier and had established from them and their followers, as well as from the Czech frontier authorities, that their account of having fought among their followers until all was over was absolutely true and the Government's stories a slander. I saw then that he had never himself believed the stories he had dutifully repeated to

me—and how eager the Government were to revenge themselves on those who had cheated them of these two men's heads. "Just between ourselves," he said, "how were they got out of the country?" "Just between ourselves," I replied, "I will tell you a secret. I am supposed to be a journalist gathering stories where he can but obeying the first commandment of that occupation 'Thou shalt never betray a source'." He grinned, shrugged his shoulders and walked away. But if the two principal culprits had escaped them, the Government and the Heimwehr had victims and to spare.

On February 17th it was announced that in decorating Vice-Chancellor Major Fey with the Great Insignia of Honour of the Republic, President Miklas thanked him for his "wise moderation in the defensive battle forced upon him". I wonder whether the very adaptable Federal President winked as he conferred this decoration, or merely stuck his tongue in his cheek. For hardly had the workers laid down their arms before an orgy of persecution and revenge began. The first man hanged was Karl Münichreiter, a married shoemaker of forty-three, with three children. Badly wounded in two places, he was brought into court on a stretcher, tried and sentenced in an hour and three hours later strung up in the courtyard. But let one of the Heimwehr papers itself describe this scene, typical of many others:

"It is 3.41. The executioner stands in his black suit with black top hat and black gloves. There stand the judges, the priest and a police-surgeon. The sentence is read over again. The corners of the man's mouth twitch. As the hangman draws the nose tight around his throat, Münichreiter shouts some Marxist phrases" [they were "Long live Social Democracy—Freedom!"]. "The hangman's assistants, who until now have been holding up the man, pull away the steps from beneath the feet of the dangling body. *After an interval of seven and a half minutes* the police-surgeon announces that he is dead."

This is how the second victim died. Young Georg Weissel, a brilliant and self-educated civil engineer, was commander of the fire brigade at Floridsdorf as well as a Schutzbund officer. He was arrested for having given the order to fire on the forces attacking one of the Floridsdorf workers' tenement blocks. His bearing before the court was remarkable. When he declined to incriminate others, the judge told him: "After your manly

admissions concerning yourself, I shall not press you to involve others. Did you act in accordance with your inner convictions? ”

“ Yes. And we surrendered because we were outnumbered, otherwise we should never have done so.”

At midnight the same night, Weissel marched with upright step to the gallows and shouted as the noose was placed around his neck : “ Long live Revolutionary Socialism ”. The judge, having watched the hanging of the young man of thirty-five whom he had sentenced to death, got into his car and drove to the humble dwelling of the widow and, placing his hands on her shoulders, said in a broken voice : “ It is I who judged your husband, and I have come to tell you that he died like a man and a hero ”.

So did nine more. At last the British Government spoke a word—which, at the request of despairing Viennese friends, I was able to do something to prompt on a certain Saturday through most undiplomatic channels, and Dollfuss promised Sir Walter Selby that there should be no more hangings in Vienna. He kept his promise, for when they caught Koloman Wallisch in the Alps a week later, they hanged him in Styria.

## CHAPTER X

### AFTERMATH OF DESTRUCTION

“*ONE CROW PICKS THE EYE OF THE OTHER*”—  
—“One crow will not pick out the eye of another”, say the  
—Germans. German Fascism refused to seize the easy opportunity of overthrowing Austrian Fascism at the time when the latter was delivering its assault on Austrian democracy. Not only did the Nazis keep perfectly quiet during the fighting, but on the succeeding Monday, February 19th, the German leader of the Austrian Nazis, Theo Habicht, broadcast from Munich an order to the Austrian Nazis to keep a strict truce for a period of seven days, which he had allowed the Austrian Government to accept the terms he dictated over the radio to them. Apart from the many instances detailed in the official Austrian Brown Book of the Nazi Putsch of July 1934, of how whole consignments of anti-Austrian literature, explosives, arms and hand grenades were seized at the German frontier by customs officers, nothing establishes more damningly that the “Austrian” Nazi movement was entirely controlled from Germany than the soldierly obedience shown to Habicht’s orders. The terrorism by explosives which had been so intensified that towards the end of January as many as forty bombs—most of them of a more frightening than dangerous character—were being detonated daily, stopped dead at the orders of Munich. Habicht’s orders were: “During this period no *Parteigenosse* is allowed to attack the Austrian Government by word of mouth, in writing or by any other means”. The word of this German subject, member of the German Reichstag, was law for the Austrian terrorists. The week’s truce—except for the occasion of Hitler’s birthday—was prolonged until the beginning of May, in the hope that Dollfuss would have been so weakened by the struggle with the Socialists that he would have to capitulate. In the interval the Nazis carried out a large-scale “missionary action” among the defeated Socialists and Communists to convert them to National Socialism, and to enrol

their stoutest fighters in the ranks of storm-troopers and S.S. guards preparatory to a Nazi Putsch against Dollfuss. The people they wanted—the stout-hearted fighters who had carelessly risked their lives in defence of the Republic and of democracy—were, of course, the last persons to listen to such an appeal. But a great many of the loosely organised camp-followers of the Left and a certain number of embittered victims of the Heimwehr, burning for revenge at any price, did for a time go over to the Nazi ranks. Within a few months, however, most of them were back again in the now illegal and underground Socialist and Communist movements. During the pause in the fighting between German and Austrian Fascists, the former made also great efforts to buy over from the Socialists the stocks of arms which they had been able to hide again; here they met with no success whatever.

Meantime, the Austrian Left were treated as outlaws with no rights whatever—free game for Heimwehr and the largely nazified police. On February 3rd, at the height of the political crisis in France, Dollfuss had curtly notified the French Minister in Vienna that the promise of no violent action against the Austrian Social-Democratic Party, which had been made by the French (but not by the British) a secret condition for granting the Lausanne Loan in the previous summer, could no longer be adhered to. Whether the Government deliberately or only accidentally suppressed the last-minute effort of the Socialist Central Committee in Vienna to prevent resistance in Linz, has not yet been established. The facts are that when Bernaschek told the Central Committee that he could not hold back his men any longer under Fascist provocation, the Committee held a last meeting on Sunday and sent out a cable in an agreed cipher :

“ Aunties condition almost hopeless but postpone operation pending doctors consultation monday ”—

meaning that there should be no resistance until after the conference of Dr. Dollfuss with the provincial Governors on the situation created by the Heimwehr seizure of public buildings. The telegram was suppressed by the post-office police censors, and the resistance of the workers made the excuse for tearing up the promise given the French in the summer of 1933. This, of course, was not the way the Heimwehr Fascists put matters—nor the way which Mr. Amery put it when, on the strength of a

couple of days in Vienna and a liberal injection of Fascist propaganda, he told a meeting of the Birmingham Unionist Association, presided over by Sir Austen Chamberlain, that what had occurred was an attempted Socialist "revolution", that the magnificent housing blocks were actually designed as "fortresses", and that Dr. Dollfuss was showing "wise and generous clemency except for the summary punishment of the few ringleaders".

Actually, in a single week Dollfuss' courts hanged nine persons, imposed three life sentences and a total of 400 years' imprisonment on thirty-one prisoners. Thousands upon thousands of supporters of the Socialist cause were flung into prison, their leaders, men and women, parliamentary and municipal deputies, being held on the fantastic charge of "high treason", although in Vienna most of them were arrested before a single shot had been fired. The Party was immediately suppressed and its parliamentary representation annulled, the trades unions were dissolved and enormously valuable workers' communal property belonging to the unions, sports and cultural organisations, confiscated overnight; most of the plunder was handed over to the Heimwehr. This is nowadays known as "restoring order". In the more honest Middle Ages such words as "pillage", "plunder", "loot" and "sacking a city" were employed. The final results are the same, excepts for the ruthless efficiency of Fascist plunderers, as the Heimwehr and the Fatherland Front discovered when their own property, communal and personal, was pillaged and plundered in the Nazi sack of Vienna. To the eternal credit of the Social-Democratic administration of Vienna be it recorded that after its suppression, all the efforts of its enemies failed to establish a single case of corruption during a period when the records of the Heimwehr and Clerical Governments stank, as they continued to do after the suppression of the Socialists, with evidence of venial sin. The real figures for killed and wounded will never be known. The Socialists estimated their dead at 1500 to 2000, including a high proportion of women and children, and their wounded at 5000. The Government said that 137 Socialists were killed and 339 wounded, which was quite ridiculous. In the Goethe-Hof alone, one of a dozen buildings shelled in Vienna, I saw the bodies of between forty and fifty men and women laid out after the surrender. Apart from those killed in the dwelling-blocks, very many must have fallen in the fierce

fighting in the streets, allotment gardens and trenches in the suburbs and at many points in the provinces. The Government figures for their own losses may have been correct—102 killed and 319 wounded.

Left in peace by the Nazis for a while, the Clerico-Fascists adopted the same methods as the former had done in Germany in dealing with their defeated political opponents. Thousands of Socialists were sent to concentration camps without trial and in some cases the private property of leaders confiscated. Diplomatic efforts to urge Dollfuss to show clemency went without result. Huge sums supplied by their comrades abroad were at first not allowed to reach the thousands of families brought suddenly to starvation by the Counter-Revolution. Eventually some of this money was allowed to be distributed through the Quakers on condition that its real origin was not disclosed to the Austrian workers. Government efforts to secure for extreme reactionary Catholic organisations the moneys subscribed by British trades unionists were with difficulty defeated.

The prison doors had barely closed on the last of the Party leaders who could be laid by the heels before a completely new outfit was at work. Provision had, of course, been made months before for such defeat, and the machinery of an "underground" party, consisting of young and vigorous Socialists whose names were unknown, started to function automatically. Secret printing-presses and multigraph centres got to work, and soon every one of Vienna's districts had its own badly printed or multigraphed underground newspaper. The headquarters of the old Party leaders was established under Bauer and Deutsch at Bruenn in Czechoslovakia, where the daily newspaper of the Party, the *Arbeiterzeitung*, reappeared as a weekly and was smuggled into Austria to the number of 75,000 copies a week, a higher figure than that of the former daily circulation. Illegal trades unions were formed. The Schutzbund reconstituted itself as an independent body embracing both Socialist and Communist members. The Communist Party, which before the savage onslaught of the Fascists had been a negligible quantity, increased its strength tenfold among the embittered masses who accepted the lesson of the Fascists that the democratic principles of Socialism lamed its resistance to Fascist dictatorship and that perhaps a more effective defence would be mass action and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. The Communists themselves



established a great underground organisation, and the police became highly specialised in the course of years in fighting both them and the Socialists, who at a conference in Bruenn had decided to drop the word " democracy " and call themselves the " Austrian Revolutionary Socialists ". Both they and the Communists absolutely rejected any idea of co-operating with the Nazis against the Clerico-Fascist tyranny. The underground struggle brought with it, of course, terrific casualties in the shape of arrests. More than once the whole central committee of each of the illegal Left movements was arrested and given heavy sentences. But within a week a fresh organisation was functioning—each time, of course, a little less efficiently, as the first-rank leaders disappeared behind prison doors. I sent so many " stories " of well-authenticated instances of the beating and torture of prisoners by both Heimwehr and police, that I was on two occasions invited by the Government to convince myself in the prisons that the stories were untrue. I was shown Mayor Seitz and other well-known leaders in their cells, and found them all defiant and unbroken of spirit. None of these, of course, had been subjected to physical ill-usage. But on each occasion also I was able to make contact with humbler prisoners who—sometimes even in the hearing of the warders—gave me terrible accounts of the brutalities to which they had been subjected. Harsh as the prison treatment was, the warders were never guilty, as far as I could ascertain, of personal violence. For this, the Heimwehr Fascists and that most brutal section of the police which secretly adhered to Nazi " ideology " were mainly responsible.

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The new wave of Nazi terrorism which was to be the prelude to the " July Putsch " began in May with the detonation of infernal machines in various Austrian railway stations. On the night of the Friday preceding Whitsuntide, a plan to terrorise foreign tourists was put into effect by the blowing up of sections of railway line in all parts of the country. Now there set in a regular campaign of destruction by explosives of telephone cables, railway lines, power-stations and the houses of patriotic supporters of Dollfuss. The number of these criminal acts increased throughout June and the first weeks of July, while in the country districts ambushes were laid for particularly hated members of the police, Heimwehr and Catholic groups. The Austrian authorities, with obvious reluctance, finally published

detailed statistics of the enormous quantity of arms and ammunition seized during this period while they were being smuggled over the frontier from Germany.

“Frauenfeld, who, by breaking his word to remain at the disposal of the police, had been able to flee to Germany,” says the Austrian Government’s official account of these days, “broadcast speeches from Munich during July in which he openly incited to the murder of the Chancellor.” This incitement was the sole burden of the articles he published in his newspaper which was printed in Munich and illegally circulated in Austria. The German Government employed its radio stations to enable Habicht to call on the Austrian troops to refuse to obey their officers. Out of its own mouth the German Government stands convicted of full responsibility for this. The *Reichs-Sendeleiter*, head of the German official radio propaganda, declared in February 1934: “We have destroyed the parliamentary principle which corrupted broadcasting, and one single man has taken charge of it by the command of the Führer—Dr. Goebbels.”

German airplanes crossed the frontier and dropped leaflets containing incitements to the Austrian population to refuse to pay their taxes and urging them to start a run on the banks by withdrawing their deposits. Between 30,000 and 50,000 Austrian Nazis who had fled the country, mostly after committing terrorist acts, were drilled and armed in Germany for the invasion of Austria. Deserters from this Legion who returned to Austria later and were arrested supplied full details of the course of lectures given them in Germany with the deliberate object of preparing them for civil war. Many Nazi terrorists were caught who were in possession of genuine German passports, made out for them in false names by the German Passport Office in Berlin. Most of the details of these German violations of international law and decency were suppressed by the Dollfuss Government until after the July Putsch, and Dr. Dollfuss himself, while outwardly defiant, was constantly seeing Nazi emissaries secretly and trying to fix up a compromise between Black and Brown Fascism. All his efforts broke down over the uncompromisingly totalitarian demands of the Nazis. And when Dollfuss cut all connections with Habicht by ordering his airplane back to Germany when Habicht was already flying over Austrian territory to meet the Chancellor, he sealed his fate.

## CHAPTER XI

### GERMANY DESTROYS DOLLFUSS

THE NEWSPAPER PUBLIC ABROAD WAS TIRING OF THE DAILY catalogue of Nazi outrages in Austria which (with a short interval after the February Counter-Revolution) had been going on for nearly eighteen months. The dog-days of August were approaching when even the wire-pullers in Berlin and Munich would find it hard to stir up Nazis in Vienna to cause much trouble. February and its aftermath had been pretty much of a strain, and on July 25th, 1934, I came out of the French travel bureau at midday with a ticket-of-leave in my pocket which would give me a fortnight to recuperate in the sun and forget the slow but steady march of the Austrian tragedy. A sleeper to the Riviera, to a country where speech and thought were still free, sounded pretty good to me, and when I saw policemen, revolver in hand, taking pot shots at the back of a building the entrance to which was in the Johannesgasse, I was not unduly disturbed. After all, there was a two-front war always in progress underground, and a few revolver-shots or bombs more or less seemed no reason to change my holiday plans. But in the Johannesgasse itself I found steel-helmeted storm detachments of police taking cover and opening rapid fire with carbines and machine-guns on the Ravag, the building of the Austrian broadcasting company. I telephoned through to my office, and was told that an announcement had just been broadcast that Dollfuss had resigned and Rintelen formed a Government. Within five minutes I had handed back my sleeper to the Riviera. I settled down to cover the Nazi rebellion from behind the shelter of shrubs surrounding the terrace of Naumann's Restaurant in the Johannesgasse until an enraged policeman rushed at and tried to club me with his carbine, and afterwards from such vantage points as I could find during the hours that the hellish din of machine-guns and hand-grenades in and around the Ravag building continued.

The police had had warning enough of the conspiracy. The

whole plot was first revealed by one of the conspirators, Hudl (who afterwards took part in the seizure of the Chancellery, was sentenced to life imprisonment, and later pardoned), to a police official at 4.30 on July 24th. Hudl revealed that the plot was to be carried out during the sitting of the Cabinet Council that evening. The session happened to be postponed till next day, however, and with it the Nazi plot. Instead of warning the Chancellor and the Cabinet of the plot against them, the political police suppressed the information except for a notification to the local police of the Inner City, who casually told the guards at the Chancellery to keep their eyes open. Early next day there was a second warning. Johann Dobler, a police inspector who was secretly a Nazi, on receiving instructions from another police traitor, Inspector Steiner, at 8 a.m. on July 25th, to stand by to take part in a *coup d'état* fixed for around midday, lost his nerve, and telephoned a warning to the Fatherland Front. At 10 a.m. he repeated in a café a detailed warning through a certain Karl Mahrer, a Heimwehr official, who telephoned Fey's adjutant, Major Wrabel, and asked to be received at once. At 10.30, Captain Mayer, who had also been told by Dobler of the plot, telephoned Fey direct, and asked to be allowed to bring the informer to Fey immediately.

Meantime the Heimwehr official Karl Mahrer had seen Major Wrabel, who personally conveyed the news to Fey, saying that Dobler was anxious to give full details, but refused to show himself in any official building. Fey sent Wrabel to meet Dobler in a café. The latter now produced the zero order addressed to the secret "S.S. Standart 89", to which he belonged. It was signed by Steiner and gave the rendezvous for the rebels—"12.15, Siebensterngasse No. 11, in the gymnasium of the German Gymnastic Association". Dobler was told to obey the summons and to play his part in the plot but not to use his arms against the executive forces. Just after 11.45 Wrabel sent two detectives to the Siebensterngasse to watch proceedings and reported to Fey. Just before 12, Fey had Dr. Dollfuss summoned from a Cabinet Council and told him of the plot to seize the Chancellery and with it the whole Cabinet. Dollfuss adjourned the Cabinet until 4 p.m., but did not leave the building. The official explanation of the failure to take proper advantage of these repeated warnings was that the head of the criminal investigation department, Hofrat Steinhäusl, the head of the storm detachment, Chief Com-

missionar Gotzmann, and other high police officials were Nazis and could not be trusted to protect the Government.

A gifted young Socialist lawyer, Dr. Fritz Kreisler, who made a detailed study of the whole plot and attended all the trials of the conspirators, emigrated to Czechoslovakia, where he produced an amazing little work entitled "Who Murdered Dollfuss?" He put some very different interpretations on the facts officially established. He questions whether Fey, when he spoke to Dollfuss at the Cabinet Council, really told him what was afoot. He calls attention to the curious emphasis with which at the trial of the murderer Planetta, the Minister Neustaedter-Stuermer said: "Fey said *something* to Dollfuss which none of us could hear". He points out that Fey, who was Commissioner-General for Security and had all the police under him, took none of the natural steps to protect the Chancellor. He did not alarm the police guards or send for the storm detachments of police created for just such an emergency, nor did he even have the great doors of the Chancellery closed against the rebels. Instead, suggests Kreisler, Fey deliberately detained Dollfuss in conversation long enough for the rebels to arrive. At Planetta's trial Fey said, "I gave the necessary orders to the police and was summoned by Dollfuss to his offices, when suddenly armed men burst into the building". With justice Dr. Kreisler asks: "What were these 'necessary orders' which allowed armed men to burst into the house?" There are very many inexplicable features of the July Putsch; they led Dr. Kreisler to find the answer: "Major Fey!" to his own question "Who Murdered Dollfuss?" That is, on examination of the evidence, a fantastic conclusion. But that Fey's hands were not clean can hardly be doubted; it is beyond question that those of his adjutant, Major Wrabel, were not. A case heard in October 1934 established that Wrabel had known all about the plot at least two days before. At the trial of the rebels it came out that in front of the imprisoned officials, Wrabel, with tears of joy in his eyes, embraced the Putsch leader who announced the resignation of Dollfuss and the accession to power of Rintelen. Fey has carried with him to the grave the answers to many questions connected with the inexplicable neglect of the whole series of warnings up to the time that the Putsch had begun. Dobler's fate was curious. The Sunday after the Putsch I was passing police headquarters, where I saw a body carried out. It was that of Dobler. They said he had flung himself into the court-

yard while under examination. Why? It was he who had done his best to warn Dollfuss. Those who might have revenged themselves on him for betraying the plot were defeated or in custody. Did Dobler know too much about the reasons for the inexplicable delaying of police action?

At ten minutes past 12, Marek, one of the two detectives sent to the Siebensterngasse, telephoned to Major Wrabel that troops and police in uniform and young men in civilian clothes were gathering in the gymnasium. At 12.15 he telephoned that they were loading up lorries with various articles, and at 12.30, while he was telephoning that other lorries had arrived, he was seized by the police conspirators and taken with them to the attack on the Chancellery. At 12.15 Secretary of State Karwinsky telephoned the Police President Dr. Seydl to send reinforcements to the Chancellery and to the Siebensterngasse. At 12.30 he telephoned again to ask whether his instructions had been carried out. The Police President admitted they had not, and told some story of having concentrated defensive measures on the Michaelerplatz, close to the Chancellery, where an attack was allegedly planned to be made on the Chancellor when he should leave the Ballhausplatz. At 12.35 Karwinsky telephoned once more, urging that alarm detachments should be sent without an instant's delay to the Chancellery and to the Siebensterngasse. At last, at 12.40, the police began to move—after the four motor-lorries loaded with conspirators (soldiers, police and civilians) had already left the Siebensterngasse for the Chancellery. Meantime, Secretary of State Karwinsky had ordered Inspector Goebel (in charge of the Security Service in the Chancellery) to close the great gates of the building; this was also about 12.35. The order was not obeyed, the excuse subsequently being given that at 12.50 the guard had to be changed. At 12.53, on the heels of the new guard in came the four lorries, loaded with armed rebels, and the gates were at last closed—by the rebels themselves, from the inside.

Despite the political situation and the repeated warnings, neither the guard nor their officers had drawn ammunition, and were promptly disarmed by the rebels, without resisting. The rebel commanders wore officers' uniform, and the guards were under the impression that the whole army had revolted against Dollfuss and that they were confronted by a *fait accompli*. The seizure of the building had been carefully worked out, and the rebels broke up into groups, each of which had its allotted tasks—



to arrest willing or unwilling police and detectives and to drive out into one of the courtyards the various civil servants and Government officials encountered. One group of rebels, headed by ex-Sergeant-Major Otto Planetta, made for the Chancellor's apartments. As Karwinsky was trying to persuade the Chancellor to leave his room and go into the adjoining building containing the State Archives, from which there was still a free exit on to the street, the Planetta detachment broke in through another door. Planetta rushed at the little Chancellor without a word and fired two shots into his body. With a weak cry for help Dollfuss flung up his hands to his head, half turned, and crashed over backwards on the floor. This happened a few minutes after 1 o'clock. For the moment the Chancellor was left lying on the floor in a pool of blood; how long he remained so, nobody knows. The first authentic news of him after the shooting is to be found in the statements of two policemen, who were allowed to try to bandage his wounds at a quarter to two. The Chancellor asked several times to see Schuschnigg, a priest and a doctor. Some time later Fey was allowed in to see him alone. The Chancellor was now lying on a divan with some cotton-wool placed on the two wounds in his neck, from which the blood was still oozing. He seems to have been persuaded by the rebels that the whole army, police force and the country had risen against him. In this heartbreaking belief, after lingering two hours and three-quarters without medical aid, he died at about 3.45 in the hands of his utterly callous Nazi captors—less than twenty-four hours after he had sent to the gallows the young Socialist Gerl for doing what thousands of Nazis had for months been doing almost with impunity—trying to damage railway property with explosives.

While this was happening in the Chancellery, I had passed outside it in pursuit of an armoured car which drew up near the building while a line of Heimwehr-men were strung out across the road under the shadow of its walls. The doors were closed and everything looked perfectly peaceful. There was nothing to give any indication that the Nazi Putschists were inside, and assuming that the armoured car and Heimwehr were there for the protection of the Chancellor, I went back to the obvious danger zone to see the final storming of the Ravag. On the way I met colleagues who complained bitterly that it was impossible to get any information from the Press Bureau in the Chancellery, as the officials refused to answer telephone calls. "Ludwig" (the Press chief now in



Dachau) "up to his games again", somebody said. "Going to ground the moment a hue and cry for important news starts among us." We did Ludwig an injustice. At that moment he was among the prisoners of the Nazis in the Chancellery.

I saw the collapse of the resistance in the Ravag of the Nazis who had held a revolver at the head of the announcer, forcing him to issue the false statement of Dollfuss' resignation, and watched the prisoners led out, kicked, prodded with bayonets and hit with rifle-butts by the police, who were savage at losing two of their number in the attack. (Other police, however, had been in the plot and had enabled the rebels to gain access to the building.) The Chancellery was now cut off by a strong cordon of police. So were telephone connections with foreign countries by the censor, and, waiting only long enough to confirm the news of the murder of the Chancellor, I hired a car and made a dash for Czechoslovakia to give the story from Bratislava.

In Vienna the Nazi Putsch was a complete failure. I saw hundreds of young Nazis in their white stockings standing around on the Ringstrasse while their leaders were besieged in the Chancellery, doing nothing. In the provinces, where the Nazis were stronger, things were different and fighting broke out which lasted for a week. The fact is that the Nazis had confidently expected the job to be done for them by Adolf Hitler through invasion, as was to be the case nearly four years later. In July 1934, as everybody knows, Mussolini rushed troops to the Brenner and warned Hitler in Berlin that the first German move across the frontier would be countered by the descent of his own troops from the Brenner. This would not have been all, for Yugoslavia, fearing to see Italy circumvent the barrier of the Karawanken Alps and be in a position to invade her from Southern Styria, rushed troops to the Maribor area, ready to cross the frontier and seize the high ground on the other side the moment the Italians left the Brenner. Czechoslovakia was prepared to push forward troops in the direction of Vienna to secure defensive positions against a German Nazi invasion. Of the many occasions when Adolf Hitler has brought Europe to the brink of a devastating war, none—until September 1938—has been more critical than that of July 1934. But as always, when confronted by signs of determination and readiness to meet force with force, Nazism had flinched. The world saw the same thing when Czechoslovakia mobilised and manned her defences on May 21st, 1938, as the German troops were concentrating around her frontiers.

While panic-stricken friends were counselling surrender lest they themselves should be involved in armed conflict, this little country called the Nazi bluff. Through these thrilling days, too, I lived at very close quarters. I have never seen a finer example of calm and confident courage by a minute democracy confronted by a great Fascist tyranny. Have the great Western Democracies at last learned the lesson, read them so clearly from Berlin on half a dozen occasions, that concessions only provoked further aggression, and on two occasions, that Nazism retreats when its bluff is called? If so, there is still a hope that we may be spared the otherwise inevitable war, or alternatively that we can face it before all the cards are in the hands of our opponents, where M. Neville J'aime Berlin is seeking to place them. Unfortunately, Mr. Chamberlain's personal policy has proved to be that of a brilliant second in the duelling field between Germany and Czechoslovakia—to Germany. When, in July 1938, Herr Hitler was alarmed at the forthcoming spiking of the guns of the Henleinist Nazis by the Czechoslovak Government bringing the Nationalities settlement before Parliament, he sent Captain Wiedemann to London to beg for British intervention in Prague. Promptly M. *J'aime Berlin* forced Lord Runciman on the Czechoslovak Government. Lord Halifax in Paris urged the French Government to support him by taking parallel action. Daladier declined, administering a neat snub to Halifax by saying it was unnecessary, as in Paris they not only saw the situation quite clearly, but also maintained a Legation in Prague which kept them fully informed.

There was nothing much to the credit of the Clerico-Fascist regime in the way it disposed of the 144 Putschists in the Chancellery. They surrendered under an unconditional written guarantee of safe conduct to the German frontier. When they came out of the building, instead of being conducted to their spiritual home as they expected, they were taken to the police barracks in the Marokkanergasse. Thirteen were hanged, the others sentenced to imprisonment and later amnestied. Here is how the Vienna correspondent of the pro-Heimwehr Budapest newspaper *Magyarszag* describes what he saw and heard outside the Chancellery that afternoon.

“ 4 p.m. Fey appears on the balcony, pale-faced and trembling. The commander of the besieging forces with an escort is admitted by the rebels for negotiations. At 4.15 the escort returns and says: ‘Fey says that no unauthorised attack must be made’.

5 p.m. The besieging Heimwehr tell us ' Rintelen has been made Chancellor '. 5.15 p.m. Police-Inspector Eibel tells us that Dollfuss is dead. 5.20 p.m. Neustaedter-Stuermer shouts to Fey on the balcony: ' If the Chancellery is evacuated, we guarantee safe-conduct for all across the German frontier '. 6.10. Fey appears on the balcony, his face whiter than before, and says: ' Please extend the time limit for evacuation until 7 p.m.'. Neustaedter-Stuermer: ' No—until 6.30 p.m. only. I reaffirm the safe-conduct with my word of honour as an officer. Not a hair of their heads shall be injured.' 7 p.m. Secretary of State Karwinsky (a prisoner of the rebels) appears at a barred window and says: ' Fey and I have promised that the German Minister, Dr. Rieth, shall come and speak with the rebels '. Fey comes out. 7.15 p.m. Dr. Rieth arrives. 8 p.m. The police enter the building."

The Austrian official Brown Book quotes a reliable witness who listened in to the conversation which Holzweber, the commander of the rebels in the Chancellery, had on the telephone with Dr. Rieth. Beginning: " This is Captain Friedrich " (his alias), " the Commander-in-Chief of the Rebels ", the conversation fully established that the German Minister must have known all about the Putsch in advance.

My colleague Nypels of the *Allgemeene Handelsblad* relates how at 4.18 p.m. a police officer, on instructions, asked the rebels whether it was any use to send for a doctor for Dollfuss and reported the reply to his superior officer—" It is no longer necessary ". At his trial Holzweber said uncontradicted that at 2.30 p.m. he had allowed Fey to telephone to the Ministry of War that Dollfuss was dying. At the trial of Planetta and Holzweber both Fey and Karwinsky admitted in court that the promise of safe-conduct was made unconditionally. When Dr. Rieth arrived and remarked with cynical jocularly to Neustaedter-Stuermer, " Crazy business, this ! " Neustaedter-Stuermer said, " Excellency, I find it very remarkable that you have no other words for this terrible event. The blood guilt for what has happened here lies on the other side of our frontier," and added that they had granted a safe conduct to Germany to " the whole of the armed men inside the Chancellery "; this was confirmed by Fey. Then this German diplomat went in to confer with the Austrian rebels and murderers, witnessing their guarantee of safe conduct, although told by Neustaedter-Stuermer that his intervention was not desired.

The Austrian Clerico-Fascists were responsible for a second breach of faith, this time with Dollfuss' murderer himself. Unable to discover who had fired the fatal shot, Police-President Skubl told them that if the murderer would give himself up, he would be hanged, but that all the others should go free to Germany. When Planetta stepped forward and confessed, the promise to hang him was very properly kept; the other promise was ignored. One London newspaper commented on the conduct of the Security Minister: "Major Fey has lost all prestige—and could only have retrieved it if he had resigned his office at once—by giving promises at the point of the pistol which he was not able to perform".

The Government's excuse for not observing the safe conduct—that it was given before it was known that Dollfuss had been murdered—is quite untenable in face of all the evidence. Instead of making the only permissible offer to the men whom they knew had murdered their leader—that of a public trial if they surrendered without resistance, otherwise the storming of the building at the point of the bayonet and a rope for every single man if their prisoners were touched—the Clerico-Fascists showed themselves apt disciples of Nazi morality by giving and immediately violating a solemn promise of safe conduct to the whole gang. The latter had even less than the usual gangsters' armaments, and would have been quite incapable of withstanding a proper military assault.

On the fourth anniversary of the Putsch—in July 1938—two of the principal rebels, Blaschke and Hudl, gave interesting supplementary details. All threads of the conspiracy, they stated, ran together into the hands of the lawyer Dr. Gustav Wächter and Friedolin Glass, the dismissed head of the Austrian Soldiers' League. It was they who issued instructions to the actual Putschists (the members of "S.S. Standarte No. 89"), to high police officials and to army officers involved in the plot. The conspirators, to avoid suspicion, selected Jewish-owned and -frequented cafés for their meetings. The plot was definitely one to seize the whole Government in the Federal Chancellery. On the fatal day Dr. Wächter established his headquarters first in Tischler's restaurant in the Schauflergasse. Blaschke himself provided the motor-lorries, Friedolin Glass supervised the uniforming of the conspirators in the Siebensterngasse and a Dr. Weidenhammer sat with Dr. Rintelen in the Hotel Imperial waiting for news of the success of the Putsch, after which all the

chief conspirators were to meet in triumph in the Chancellery. Having watched with Wächter the successful seizure of the Chancellery, says Blaschke, they made an appointment to meet Rintelen outside the building. Rintelen failed to turn up. Wächter, he says, found the doors of the Chancellery closed against him by his own men, who took no notice of his knocking. He went to the Hotel Imperial, where, despite his warnings, Rintelen allowed himself to be persuaded by Dr. Funder, editor of the *Reichspost*, to present himself to Schuschnigg in the Ministry of War. Here Rintelen was arrested. Wächter and Blaschke now tried to get into the Ravag building, but were turned back by the police who were storming it. Together with Friedolin Glass they now went to police headquarters to call upon Hofrat Steinhäusl, the most highly placed police traitor, to play his part by going to the Police Presidency, announcing that he had taken over the command of all the police and arrest all loyal police officials who refuse to obey him. "Meantime, however, treason", says Engineer Blaschke—remember, of course, that he is speaking in Looking-Glass Austria and that he means "treason" towards traitors—"had reached as far as the Police Presidency, and Steinhäusl was arrested on arriving there." Finally all three heads of the conspiracy—Wächter, Glass and Blaschke—were arrested outside the Chancellery. Fortunately for them, not all the police were traitors to the traitors. They were rescued from the "hostile police" who had arrested them by another police official, "one of our people", who released them. Blaschke also confirms the accuracy of the oft-questioned plot of the brothers Ott to kidnap President Miklas in Carinthia—a plot which failed. Dr. Wächter finally escaped the hangman's noose by getting into Hungary on a Danube boat disguised as a bargee.

Hudl reveals how only picked men were employed for the seizure of the Chancellery, and claims that they included nine serving police officials. He describes how, while in the Chancellery with the rebels, dressed in Major's uniform, which of course he was not entitled to wear, he watched machine-guns, armoured cars and *Minenwerfer* being got into position for storming the building, and learned that Miklas had given orders for this to be carried through at the expiry of a ten minutes' ultimatum. The ultimatum, he claims, was rejected, but no attack followed—largely of course owing to Fey's fears for his own life. Hudl's story of the two promises of safe conduct made to the rebels,

the first before their surrender, and the second after it by Police Chief Skubl conditional on the man who had fired on Dollfuss confessing, fully confirms the version I have given from non-Nazi sources. It contains the additional information that Major-General Zehner was also a party to the promise of safe conduct. The inexcusable granting of this promise and its immediate violation furnish the gunmen of July 1934 with their only justifiable complaint in face of their own crimes against the Schuschnigg Government. Naturally they utilised it, as it will continue to be utilised for all time, to the full.

I managed with difficulty to be present at the trial of Planetta and Holzweber, which began suddenly at 5 p.m. on July 30th. Every effort was made to rush the proceedings and hang the two men the same night, before too many foreign journalists could get in and hear the whole amazing story with its compromising revelations concerning members of the Government, high police and army officials. The entire proceedings confirmed that Dollfuss was surrounded on all sides by traitors and double-crossers; the biggest problem was to make up one's mind as to who had been playing fair with the rebels and false with the Government and vice versa. Both the accused faced their judges with courage. Planetta, a bullet-headed, bull-necked brute of a man, kept fingering the throat around which he knew the strangle-noose would be tied in a few hours in a manner which was the more horrible because it came clearly from the subconscious. Holzweber, who looked more like a pedantic and narrow-minded village schoolmaster than a soldier, blinked occasionally behind his thick glasses. The two displayed no other signs of nervousness or fear. One or two specially selected representatives of Fascist newspapers from various countries were tipped off and allowed in at the trial, but the Government Press Department declined to assist others to get in. I was able to make my own arrangements.

Planetta, whose elder brother was an Austrian officer and younger brother a Heimwehr officer, had been dismissed from the army in 1932 for seditious Nazi activities. He declined to reveal the names of those who were behind the plot, but said they had been told that "very high personages" had approved of it. Dr. Otto Wächter, a Viennese Nazi lawyer who escaped abroad, was, it was later established, Holzweber's immediate superior and conveyed the orders of the German Nazi Party for the Putsch to be made. He admitted shooting Dollfuss once—



he said, accidentally—but strenuously denied having fired the second shot. (This persistent denial was one of Dr. Kreisler's reasons for putting the guilt on to Fey.) While verdict and sentence were being deliberated, Planetta's sister, a plump blonde, sat behind me calmly smoking a cigarette. When asked if he had anything more to say, Planetta said: "I know that in a few hours I shall live no longer. I am not a cowardly assassin. I regret the consequences of my action." Three hours later both men were hanged. The next day the German radio stations were proudly quoting a pro-Nazi British journalist's "eye-witness" account of the end of these two terrorists as a glorification of their "heroism".

Rintelen was arrested and made a half-hearted attempt to commit suicide, which secured him pleasant quarters in a sanatorium during the three of his twenty years' sentence which he "served" before being released in triumph in March 1938.

The fighting in the provinces which followed the murder of Dollfuss was serious, but the end was never in doubt. What finally broke the spirit of the rebels was the scattering above their trenches by Government airplanes of hundreds of thousands of leaflets quoting—a statement by Adolf Hitler! It was taken from a letter addressed by Adolf Hitler to the incorrigible intriguer, who succeeded four years later in betraying Dollfuss' successor by inducing him under false pretences to make the fatal visit to the German Chancellor in Berchtesgaden—Herr von Papen. Without asking the *agrément* of the Austrian Government, Herr Hitler told Papen he had decided to appoint him German Minister in Vienna "directly under me personally", as a contribution to peace. In his letter, Hitler disowned the former Minister in Vienna, Dr. Rieth, for having "consented to an agreement concluded between Austrian rebels and Austrian Federal Ministers for the safe conduct of the rebels to Germany without referring to the German Government". Month after month weapons of death and incitements to murder had been the most significant exports from Germany to Austria, but now the world had been shocked by the Nazi murder of the Austrian champion, and so Germany's Minister was adjudged guilty of unheard-of misconduct for which his Chancellor had recalled him in disgrace. To quote Adolf Hitler again: "Dr. Rieth, by his actions, has involved the German Reich without any justification in an internal Austria affair". The shock to foreign countries at this culmination of the long Nazi campaign of terrorism, which



Dollfuss' successor characterised as undoubtedly "intended, pre-arranged and deliberate", produced another very interesting phrase: "The assassination of the Austrian Federal Chancellor which has still further increased the already extreme tension in Europe without our fault, is most strongly condemned and regretted by the Government of the German Reich". This condemnation and regret seem to have been overlooked when in March 1938 Herr Hitler's deputy, Rudolf Hess, made a pious pilgrimage to the assassin's grave to lay a wreath upon it as one of the first acts of the new rulers of Austria.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is July 1938—four years later, when Hitler has triumphed in Austria and no longer needs to wash his hands of the Dollfuss murder before a revolted world. Let us pause to glance at how this "condemnation and regret" is expressed under the altered circumstances when the mask has been dropped. Here is Herr Hitler's principal organ, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, of July 24th. Instead of "condemnation and regret" we have "pride in the celebration of the memory of the most heroic epoch of our movement on Austrian soil. Thirteen of our comrades died the most frightful death which the Jesuit brains of the Schuschnigg system could think out for them. To-day, struggle and martyr's death have found their glowing glorification". We are told that at that time, "while tens of thousands had only scorn or hatred" for the executed men, these enjoyed the support only of "a handful of true comrades", with "far away, as the luminous annunciation of victory, the picture of the Führer". This presentation of a handful of Nazi conspirators surrounded by the scorn and hatred of all decent Austrians is useful and true enough; unfortunately for the condemned criminals, it was with "condemnation and regret" that the distant picture of the Führer glowed for them—when it suited him to disown them. However, the dead men's relatives found perhaps consolation in the Führer's exploitation of these men's deaths as "victory propaganda" in 1938, and so may have been able to forget the fact that he had denied them thrice and oftener before the cock had crowed once over their scaffolds in 1934.

Now, when they are four years dead, we read: "When that gruesome murder became a fact"—we are through the Looking-Glass, and the *Beobachter* is speaking, needless to say, not of the murder of the defenceless Dollfuss, but of the execution of his murderers—"a wave of horror passed over Germany. With

the sentence of death, Schuschnigg and Company were for ever shut out of common German feeling. From that day onwards, National Socialism in Austria fought, not against political opponents, but against scoundrelly murderers." (It was in July 1936 that the immaculate Führer concluded with the chief "scoundrelly murderer", Schuschnigg himself, the Austro-German Agreement binding the former to respect the Austrian independence which the latter destroyed in March 1938.)

"What the Schuschnigg system expected did not happen; the masses of illegal Nazis did not fall away in horror; they closed up their ranks ever more fanatically"—unlike, evidently, their Führer. "So", writes Dr. Walther Schmidt in this *Völkischer Beobachter* editorial, "we honour to-day the memory of those July days of 1934, with reverence for the greatness of their deaths". With no less impassioned oratory in the same number does *Gauleiter* Bürckel honour the memory of the rebels, gunmen and murderers of July 1934. He describes the plot as "the uprising of the people". In cold fact, leaving aside the provinces, out of Vienna's population of nearly 2,000,000 precisely 144 conspirators in the Chancellery, ten accomplices outside it and fourteen in the Ravag building rebelled. "The executions were not an act of justice, but common murder." In speaking of the steps taken by the Government of Austria to suppress the rebellion, Herr Bürckel talks of "orgies celebrated by the infamous inquisition". The issue of the *Völkischer Beobachter* contains supplements devoted to exalting the memory of the murderer of the Chancellor and his accomplices. The poet and dramatist Karl Hans Strobl contributes a lyrical "*Totenfeier*"—a memorial celebration to be held "outside Mauer Cemetery, where lies the grave of Holzweber", which honours them as Wagnerian heroes. The "thirteen" becomes a fateful number; the "vengeful thirteen" await their opportunity to strike at Schuschnigg. Then follow couplets referring to the tragic death of Frau Schuschnigg in such inimitable Nazi taste that I should hate to deprive anyone of the chance of reading them in the original:

"*The Voice* :—*Ihr Tod wurde Klage und Rache fanal  
Dreizehn ist eine schlimme Zahl.*

*Und lauernd stand nun jede Stund  
Die rächende Dreizehn in Hintergrund*

*Sie nahm dem Mörder das eigene Weib  
Sie frass ihm selber in Seele und Leib."*

("Their deaths were an accusation and torch of revenge;  
In ambush stood now at every hour, the revengeful thirteen in  
the background.

They took from the murderer his own wife  
And ate into his body and soul.")

The mumbo-jumbo goes on to relate how the mystic, evil number thirteen changed its aspect and became a thirteenth of March (1938) and brought the end of Austria. "Thirteen times burned into our hearts is their deaths at the murderer's hand." The Voice is answered by a Chorus :

"Their death was not in vain  
For now burns the eternal flame."

Then, run the stage directions, "The last verses are gradually under-coloured with the softly approaching notes of *Deutschland Ueber Alles*, which now swell forth loudly. The torch-bearers fling their torches into the Bowl of Sacrifice, whose flaming tongues leap high". To which glorification of assassination, the only suitable comment from outside the frontiers of Looking-Glass Austria, seems to be "Wow!" or perhaps "Sez you!"

July 25th, 1938, struck terror into the hearts of everyone—Aryans and non-Aryans alike—who were not members of the Nazi Party. It was the Gunmen's Gala. The conscience of even this modern world outside Germany which the dictators have rendered so case-hardened was shocked for a moment at this spectacle of the rulers of a great European State officially glorifying murder. The gangster heroes of "S.S. Standarte No. 89" paraded again outside the German gymnasium in the Siebensterngasse from which they had set out exactly four years before on the expedition which ended in the murder of Dollfuss and in the loss of several hundred lives. All the notorious conspirators were there to be honoured by the country they had helped to destroy their own—Dr. Wächter, the disloyal police president Steinhäusl, Rintelen's co-conspirator Dr. Weidenhammer, Paul Hudl, who, disguised in a major's uniform, had been in nominal command of the murderer of Dollfuss, Dietrich, the chauffeur who had driven the murderer through the gates of the Chancellery, Friedolin Glass, the treacherous ex-leader of the Austrian Soldiers' League who had organised the military side of the plot, and Dr. Ott, one of the plotters of the kidnapping of Miklas which failed to come off. Through the streets of Vienna—Looking-Glass Vienna—marched the men whose deed

had shocked the entire world four years before, as those whom the State most delighted to honour. No wonder that on this day honest Viennese fled the streets where the friends of assassination celebrated their triumph with fresh orgies of brutalities towards their down-trodden opponents of evil.

Outside the scene of their crime others awaited them. Seyss-Inquart, Governor-General of Austria, friend of Schuschnigg, who had written of him five months before, "Seyss-Inquart possesses my fullest confidence", and who was now in the hands of the Gestapo in their notorious prison of the Hotel Metropol not far away, was there with other representatives of those who had stabbed Austria in the back as the gangsters had stabbed her from the front. There was the new *Gauleiter* of Vienna, the man with the fine old teutonic name of Globocnik, Dr. Jury, the conspiratorial physician, and Kaltenbrunner, the chief S.S. conspirator in Upper Austria. To them advanced Friedolin Glass as Gangster Leader and reported all present and correct, save for the seven who had been tried and hanged. To the relatives of Otto Planetta, the actual Dollfuss murderer, and of the other six, Globocnik announced that they would never again be allowed to want for anything. Proudly then was the marble tablet unveiled to commemorate what the ignorant world outside the Nazi movement still considers the crime of July 1934, and entrusted to the care of Dr. Seyss-Inquart. There it will stand so long as the Nazi dictatorship holds Austria in its grasp for all the world to read on the entrance to the famous Chancellery on the Ballhausplatz, now degraded as the *Reichsstatthalterei*—the Governor-General's offices. It runs: "154 German men of No. 89 S.S. Standarte stood up here for Germany on July 25th, 1934". The wording should be noted. It implicates not merely the Austrian Nazis, but official Germany which sanctioned it, in the revolt and the murder of Dollfuss. It establishes for all time that these gunmen were not simple revolutionaries, but members of a German military organisation—"S.S. Standarte No. 89" (for which they had been recruited some weeks before by Herr Himmler himself, head of the whole German Secret Police, as that body's official organ, the *Schwarze Korps*, established in its issue of May 12th, 1938. The same issue of the *Schwarze Korps* put on record that this German military body, Standarte No. 89, was maintained throughout Dr. Schuschnigg's Chancellorship right up to the day of invasion and annexation—maintained by and as part of the German forces under Himmler himself). The

July 1936 Agreement and Herr Hitler's solemn recognition of Austria's sovereignty and independence, the solemn promises not to interfere in her internal affairs were violated day after day—those who later fondly imagined that there would be any value in a German promise to respect the “neutrality” of Czechoslovakia might have noted this—as this tablet erected by the German authorities themselves recalls.

“Seven found death at the hands of the hangman.” It is a good, solid marble tablet. Yet I think, if it is allowed to stand, that time will have brought it to decay before the world ceases to associate with this building one Austrian man who on July 25th, 1934, stood up here for Austria and found death at the hands of those whom this tablet seeks to commemorate.

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On the night of the assassination, while Dollfuss lay dead at the Ballhausplatz after Major Fey had given his account of and made his apologia for the events of that day, the new ruler of Austria made his *début* to the people (as in March 1938 he was to take his leave of them) over the radio. Few Austrians at that time had heard the voice of Kurt von Schuschnigg, which later they were to know so well. The same deep emotion, the same struggle to keep back the tears were audible in Schuschnigg's first as in his last broadcast as Chancellor. As he told of the death of his friend Dollfuss, Schuschnigg spoke not as an orator or as one who wished to move the crowd. His voice was that of a scholar, torn abruptly from his studies to bear witness to some horror which had taken him out of himself. It was impossible to doubt the sincerity of this man who seemed to be relating his grief to an intimate circle of friends rather than to a world audience.

Then Schuschnigg turned to the future. “We will keep stern watch”, he said, “that peace and order, decency and civilisation are maintained in this country. We will let nothing—no, nothing at all—move us from our path—the path which we see to be the only right and possible one for Austria. We will keep faith with our dead Chancellor across the grave.

“I call upon you, to whom the word Truth—the German word Truth—still means something to stand firmly together so that this day of suffering will give place to a better future. The blood sacrifice of the Chancellor shall not have been made for nothing. Let us keep faith with him and with our beloved—to the very end beloved—Austria.”

## CHAPTER XII

### KURT VON SCHUSCHNIGG

THE MAN WHO TOOK OVER THE HELM OF AUSTRIA FROM THE hands of his murdered friend was almost an unknown quantity to the Austrian public. The fact that he did so take over established at once for those who understood the situation that he unquestionably possessed one quality—that of personal courage. For Schuschnigg had abundant evidence that the July Putsch was no isolated outburst, but one of a series of alternatives planned in Germany for the murder of his predecessor and the rape of his country. The blow was struck at this particular moment in the only way then possible because a diversion was badly needed in Germany after the massacres of June 30th which had shown to the world the supposedly firm edifice of Nazi dictatorship cracking in all directions. It has always been at such moments that Herr Hitler has struck out on some new and dangerous adventure—the seizure of Austria followed close on the heels of the Reichswehr crisis of January 1938—a fact which those whose business it is to watch out for signs of activity from the Nazi Vesuvius have presumably taken note of. The day after the murder, July 26th, the so-called “Kollerschlag Document” was found by frontier guards concealed in the shirt and shoes of a German Nazi courier named Franz Heel while he was crossing the frontier at the dead of night. One paper was a general instruction sent from Germany to the Austrian Nazis as to how they were to act in case of “the Government being forced to resign”. On this occurring, the document said, a vacuum would ensue. The Nazis must take advantage of this to seize public buildings everywhere and thus power over Austria. Orders were to be issued to the executive, and the new Chancellor ignored. The key-word for this was to be “Summer Festival”, and the document went on: “If the new regime offers resistance to us, the ‘Summer Festival’ is to develop into ‘Prize Shooting’ and the ‘Italian Night,’ as prearranged”. This document is of

enormous interest when referred to the actual establishment of Nazi dictatorship in March 1938. One paragraph corresponds closely with the tactics then followed. It runs: "If we carry the provinces, Vienna cannot hold out. The movement must appear to be spontaneous and unconnected with a foreign country. Details must at first be kept secret from all Storm-Troop and S.S. Guard headquarters, and not be revealed below Brigade Leaders. Standarte Leaders must know only so much as necessary to enable them to prepare individual actions. On the occupation of buildings the Swastika banner is to be hoisted, a political amnesty proclaimed and the fugitive Nazis summoned home. Neutrality towards the Reds as long as they keep quiet. Leading opponents to be arrested or put out of the way if they resist. The whole news apparatus and traffic system to be thrown out of gear and wrecked if fighting ensues. Avoid armed conflict with army and police if possible. After the seizure of power, storm-troopers to be armed as the troops of the new regime and given Swastika brassards. Individual police must be outnumbered and made to realise that to resist us would cost them their lives. When they are in strength, they must be avoided—no hasty open rebellion."

Still more significant for anyone taking over the Chancellorship was the second document, a cipher key, the first item of which was:

"For 'Dollfuss dead'—cable 'Old plate en route'."

Heel admitted having been given the documents in Munich to bring to Austria. In Salzburg a storm-troop leader named Altmann was caught with written orders from Freilassing in Bavaria to start an armed revolt. The German Press Photo Service in the Reich sent out to selected papers as early as *July 22nd* photographs to be used *after* the Putsch had begun; one was captioned: "Dr. Rintelen, who is negotiating in Vienna to form a new Cabinet". Another photograph was of the Vienna broadcasting station, with a caption that it had been blown up,

Unfortunately for German efforts to establish their innocence, neither of these predicted events took place. At the trial of nine traitor police in Vienna on August 8th proofs were produced of a plot dated July 1933, a year before, for 20,000 Bavarian troops to march on Vienna in support of another Nazi rising. In October 1933 another Putsch plot was discussed in detail



at Passau under the chairmanship of Röhm, one of the best-known Nazi homosexual leaders (who was shot by the orders of his former friend Adolf Hitler on June 30th, 1934), with Theo Habicht in attendance. The truth of these court revelations was admitted to me by a highly-placed Nazi, who added that there had been a third Putsch plot from Germany which, like the others, could not be put into operation because of some eleventh-hour hitch.

What courage was demanded for Schuschnigg to take over was evident on the Sunday night following the murder, when he formed his Cabinet, and on the following morning, when the Diplomatic Corps, who with Schuschnigg and the new Government attended a requiem Mass for Dollfuss in St. Stephen's Cathedral, had to walk past the muzzles of machine-guns with troopers kneeling beside them ready to feed the belts. They passed up the aisle between a double row of men armed with carbines, revolvers and sabres; at each corner of the Cathedral a machine-gun detachment was stationed. The night before I had walked across from my office to the Ballhausplatz to enquire as to the progress of the negotiations over the new Cabinet—and found the Chancellery once more in a state of warlike preparation. This was partly due to the discovery of the Nazi plot to kidnap President Miklas, for which the two brothers Ott later received exemplary sentences—but were of course pardoned. The main cause for alarm was the threat of a split in the ranks of the existing dictators—between Schuschnigg and his Clericals and Fey with his Heimwehr-Fascists. Not only that—Starhemberg was disgruntled at not becoming Fascist dictator of Austria as Mussolini's nominee, and for a time refused to play. Fey was discovered to have plotted a coup against Schuschnigg, because the latter wished to jettison him for his suspected double-dealing over July 25th. I found barbed-wire entanglements out, not only at the Chancellery, but in many parts of the city, some of them obviously barricades to keep in Fey's Heimwehr should they make a sortie against the Government. For three hours Starhemberg vainly urged his claims with Miklas; finally Fey's blackmail succeeded to a point, and Schuschnigg made him his Minister for Security and deputy to Starhemberg, who became Vice-Chancellor.

All who wished Austria well tried to hope that Schuschnigg,

coming with something like a clean sheet with respect to the tragedy of Dollfuss' and Fey's assault on the Socialists and democracy in February, would reverse this disastrous policy. The Left would have gladly helped to cover up the lesser share of responsibility which fell to Schuschnigg as a member of the Dollfuss Cabinet in return for such reversal. Slowly it became evident that Schuschnigg was as lacking in real political genius as he was endowed with personal courage and most of the minor political talents. During the fighting against the Nazis the Left had stood aside, giving out the parole "Let the Fascists destroy one another". I found that their leaders had little hopes of Schuschnigg, because they of course knew his background, but the masses of the workers did for a while believe that such measure of reparation as was feasible at all might now be made for the past. If not possible at the moment because of the power of the Heimwehr, the way might have been left open until, as happened later, they had been disposed of. But although Schuschnigg was inclined to reward the workers for lending no hand to the Nazis against him despite their bitter memories of five months earlier, by releasing a great many prisoners, he was not prepared to take one single fundamental step to redress the wrongs of the Socialists.

He was tied by the Heimwehr. He was tied by Mussolini, who had just saved him from Hitler and whose condition for continued support was "no more democracy in Austria". The Western "democracies" were still not prepared to replace Mussolini as guarantors of Austria—and to make it a free Austria, capable of gathering every liberty-loving patriot around the standard. Above all, Schuschnigg was tied by his past—by his underlying Germanophilism, his Jesuit upbringing, his admiration of Seipel and personal affection for the murdered Dollfuss. He could not undo any of their work, he could not shake hands across their graves with the "Red Antichrist". Although he was more worldly than the one, more politically educated than the other, he was unable to shake off the influence of this Clerical tag. But on August 2nd he made a speech in which, while endeavouring to arouse Socialist hopes and secure at least their neutrality by saying "We do not regard dictatorial government as ideal, we shall be glad later to consult the people and hear their advice", he deprived these words of all value for democrats by adding "within the framework of the Corporative [*i.e.* Fascist] State",

and proclaiming : " We consider it impossible that parliamentary democracy should be restored in Austria ". Even short of this, Schuschnigg could have bought the support of the forty-two per cent. of the population who were Socialists by amnestying all their leaders as well as the rank and file, restoring all confiscated property, compensating the victims and relatives of the killed and allowing freedom of combination and collective bargaining in free trades unions. Even if the Heimwehr and Mussolini stood in the way of this also at that moment, there were many occasions later, when the one had been rendered powerless and the other had turned his back on Schuschnigg, when it could have been done. In the end it was promised—eight days before the Nazi flood burst the dams. The insurmountable barrier was the man's own character and background.

Kurt von Schuschnigg can be acquitted of having planned to become what circumstances made of him for nearly four years—Dictator of Austria. In him was none of the megalomania, the lack of mental balance and sense of proportion, the craving for limelight, the self-dramatisation, hysteria and mysticism, the tyrannical impulses which made a Hitler, a Mussolini or a Dollfuss. Had Dollfuss lived, Schuschnigg would have remained his cool, collected and efficient lieutenant. Yet the man showed a burning faith in himself and in his mission—to keep out the threatening Brown flood and preserve the independence of his little country. Unhappily for Austria, all this was given a kink by Schuschnigg's narrow-minded clerical Catholicism and his almost pious devotion to the aims of Seipel and Dollfuss, to both of whom he was the true spiritual successor. Scholar of the Jesuits, Schuschnigg's fervent Catholicism was perhaps his strongest characteristic; warring with it as Chancellor was his feeling for *Deutschtum*—German Nationalism. Both helped to incline him to distrust the masses, majority decisions and democracy. They gave him an eclectic taste, as he once said in a speech to the Fatherland Front, for " not the most votes, but the best votes ". Catholicism kept him aloof from the men who enjoyed the confidence of the masses, until his last two weeks of rule—the underground trades-union leaders, the shop stewards and the young men who for four years defied imprisonment in order to keep the workers together and prevent them being lured into accepting either Black or Brown Fascism. Catholicism led him to fight and overthrow Starhem-

berg and his Fascist secularism. It led him to defy the constant risk of assassination and to remain cool and courteous under a ceaseless campaign of slander and contumely from the Third Reich. His German Nationalism led him to conclude the disastrous Austro-German agreement of July 11th, 1936, which was the beginning of the end. His *Deutschtum* held him always back at the last, despite various tentative discussions, from allying himself firmly with his partner in danger, Czechoslovakia.

Schuschnigg is the son of a typical Austrian regimental officer of Slovenian origin. His grandfather, Major-General Schuschnigg—the “von” was only bestowed on the family in 1898—had a Bavarian wife. General Alois von Schuschnigg, his father, did most of his garrison service under the Monarchy amidst the national minorities where German Nationalism, later to develop into Nazism, was strongest. This German racial feeling was modified by the super-racial loyalty to the Habsburgs, which the rulers of the polyglot monarchy taught to all servants of the State whatever their nationality. Schuschnigg grew up German-conscious, but also devotedly loyal to the Legitimate House. At an early age he was sent to the famous college of the Jesuits in Vorarlberg, the Stella Matutina; the Society of Jesus there put an indelible stamp on his character. In the Stella Matutina Schuschnigg learned the gifts of statesmanship, of manipulating and using others to suit his purpose so unobtrusively that they themselves hardly noticed it—lessons which this most skilful of all Catholic orders understands so well how to inculcate in those likely to prove suitable instruments of the Church. Here Schuschnigg learned to think out quietly each move in the political game, to examine its efficacy from every angle, to take in advance every possible precaution against failure without allowing an inkling of his plans to become known, and then to strike at the chosen moment. Unshakeable self-control which was later to make him the coolest and most reserved of Europe’s dictators the Jesuits taught him also.

“Schuschnigg took his studies too seriously”, one of his school colleagues said of him some years ago. Grave and earnest even as a youth, Schuschnigg learned to suppress almost throughout his career all indications of *joie de vivre* and a temperament which, despite stern control, was at heart not so other-worldly as he himself imagined. As he gained experience in addressing vast numbers, Schuschnigg learned the art of casting off his

reserve and speaking with something like the fire and passion of a popular orator. During his four years' Chancellorship, even his voice seemed to change, the dry, scholarly look gave place to an eager alertness, a new and vigorous spring came into his walk, the shoulders of the always upright and soldierly figure seemed to stand the more square as the attacks of his powerful enemy grew more bitter and ruthless.

Schuschnigg was always a good-looking man on whom the eyes of women lingered with a more frank and more healthy admiration than that inspired by the greater sex-appeal of the much-experienced and disdainful Starhemberg. When danger and persecution lent him this added vigour, he became both an attractive and commanding figure to his followers, the incorporation of that new type of State which, following in the path of Dollfuss, he tried devotedly to create—a very Catholic, Germanic, independent and non-democratic Austria, modelled on the swindle formula invented by Fascist Italy—the “Corporative State”. (After more than seven years' verbal gestation, not even the Italy of Mussolini has succeeded in giving birth to this monstrosity foredoomed by its nature to be stillborn in any event. Of an Austrian birth there was never a moment's hope.) And yet, for all his sincerity, something often seemed not to ring quite true when Schuschnigg spoke. Not the man, but the cause was at fault. Catholicism could not be combined with real friendship for a Government which was so bitterly persecuting its own Catholics. Independence, freedom from Nazi tyranny was bound to sound a half-hearted cry when combined with it came always the refusal of personal liberty and democracy.

Schuschnigg went young into the War—at seventeen—serving through most of it as battery observation officer on the Italian front. He was a completely conscientious, technically efficient and courageous officer, the perfect type of one who could never be charged with “conduct unbecoming an officer and gentleman”. On August 3rd, 1918, after gaining four military decorations, he was captured together with his father by the Italians, who retained them both as prisoners of war until as late as August 1919. Schuschnigg's training by the Jesuits must have come in useful later to help him forget this arbitrary imprisonment when he had to lean on the Italians for support. After the War he passed his law examinations and began to practise in Innsbruck, where he became a fervent leader of the

Tyrolese Catholic youth organisation. In this capacity he first met Monsignore Seipel, then at the outset of his long and cautious scheming for the overthrow of the democratic Republic. In 1928 Schuschnigg was elected parliamentary deputy on the Clerical—"Christian-Social"—ticket. Seipel made him *rapporteur* for legal and budgetary matters. In Schuschnigg's *rapport* on the 1929 Constitution—a bad compromise which the Socialists were forced resentfully to accept under threats of violent Heimwehr action—he first appeared openly as an enemy of the republican democracy established by the Revolution of 1918. The 1929 Constitution achieved the maximum of reaction towards pre-war conditions, obtaining this without actually putting into effect the threats of armed revolt freely made by the Heimwehr. Schuschnigg became Minister of Justice in the second Buresch Cabinet in 1932, and retained this portfolio until overthrown by the Nazis in 1938.

The preliminary measures for cutting the ground beneath the feet of the Socialists during the years of preparation for counter-revolution were mostly devised in this ministry. The Ministry of Justice was most closely concerned with the counter-revolutionary activities of the courts after February 1934—the hangings, the imprisonments and the concentration camps. By a cruel irony of fate, Schuschnigg became the principal architect of the new Concordat which made the Austrian marriage laws synonymous with canon law. This it was which, after the tragic death of Schuschnigg's wife (who was killed at his side in a motor accident in July 1935), barred the way to his marriage with the Countess Vera Czernin—*née* Fugger—to whom the lonely and harassed Chancellor turned trustingly for support and comfort. Vera Czernin was separated from her husband, and the Concordat which Schuschnigg himself had drawn up prevented her two children from acquiring a new father and his own little son a new mother.

As Minister of Justice, Schuschnigg was responsible for the laws confiscating the property of the defeated Socialist leaders, restricting and finally abolishing the liberty of the Press, restoring the death penalty abolished by the Republic, as well as for those rendered necessary to fight the long terrorist campaign of the Nazis. Finally Schuschnigg had to take responsibility for his Ministry's drafting of the May 1934 Clerico-Fascist Constitution. Of the latter Schuschnigg said at the time :



" It deliberately turns its back on formal democratic principles and on universal, equal and direct suffrage. It lays weight on independent and strong leadership; hence the providing of emergency powers and the right to alter laws by decree."

In May 1933 Schuschnigg received in addition the portfolio of Education. With energy he flung himself into the task of eradicating liberalism, socialism and free thought from the schools and placing the moulding of the mind of youth entirely in the hands of the priest. Theatre, film and literature were harnessed to the chariot of the Catholic Church. After the February Counter-Revolution, Clerical bigotry had full play, and worked untold harm to the prospect of survival for the Dollfuss—later Schuschnigg—regime. Month after month the priesthood by its blindness to the currents of the times dug its own grave.

Mrs. Grundy and Mr. Pecksniff received a free hand and used it. Before even the bodies of the men and women killed in the February bombardments had been buried, Dollfuss had installed priests and mission chapels in the buildings, shell-scarred by his artillery, which had been built by men and were inhabited by men and women who for more than a generation had been fervent anti-Clericals. " Religion is each man's private affair " was the motto of the Socialists; Dollfuss made it a test for the right to earn a livelihood. In all directions the priests acquired power to interfere with the private life of the citizens. Most foolishly, economic and other pressure was adopted to force life-long agnostics to profess a religion which meant nothing to them and to send their children for instruction from the priests whom they regarded as the misleaders of youths and corrupters of intelligent and independent thought. Birth-control clinics, where the Socialists had provided free instruction for working-women, to enable them to limit their families in accordance with their prospects of supporting them, were, of course, closed down overnight. The slot-machines in men's public conveniences which had so enormously decreased venereal diseases by making preventives procurable with privacy at every hour of the day and night were promptly screwed down. The familiar signs in druggists' windows advertising those useful and hygienic articles had to be altered from " Olla's Rubbers " to " Olla's Rubber-sponges "—a typically silly piece of hypocrisy.

Political parades and demonstrations of the Government supporters had to be preceded by a military Mass. The smallest



piece of work undertaken by Government or municipality required the solemn blessing of a priest. One of Vienna's most popular comedians, in a skit on the regular Vienna radio broadcast announcements, gave out as part of the programme: "At 9.15 a.m. Cardinal Archbishop Dr. Innitzer will bless the new village W.C. before it is taken into use at Mistelbach station". Within a couple of weeks, of course, the Clerical dictatorship had suppressed this piece of "blasphemous mockery". As in Germany, where a famous Munich comedian in intervals of imprisonment has ventured to poke such fun at the tyrants as to tell his audience that, wonderful as it is to think that ninety-eight per cent. in Munich voted "*Ja*" for the Führer, he has such bad luck that wherever he goes he meets only the two per cent., so under the Austrian dictatorship jokes at the expense of the regime could not be repeated many times on the stage.

After the murder of Dollfuss, the "Martyr Chancellor" legend was worked to death and became a bore to the general run of citizens. Every city and hamlet was ordered to have its Dollfuss Square. Everywhere—in a country where unemployment was rife and many went hungry—Dollfuss Crosses, Dollfuss Martyr Memorials and Dollfuss Chapels were put up. The only thing in which Socialists and Nazis were agreed was in resenting all this clerical bigotry.

There was a story of Schuschnigg inviting a village mayor of Tyrol to come to Vienna and call on him on the Ballhausplatz. Schuschnigg asked the worthy peasant if he understood the meaning of one of his pet slogans, "Austria's Awakening in the Christian, Corporative State".

"No, not altogether, Excellency," was the reply, "but of course we all believe in it."

"Let me explain it to you," said Schuschnigg, and led him to the window. "Tell me, what do you see outside?"

"Well," said the mayor, "I see a man getting into a motor-car and a mother with her child standing beside it."

"If you come back to me in one year's time," said Schuschnigg, "and look out again, you will see ten motor-cars and ten men getting into them and ten mothers standing with their children outside, and that, my dear Mayor, will be Austria's re-birth in the Christian, Corporative State."

Back in his village Rathaus, the mayor, proudly summoned his councillors and said: "Let me tell you the meaning of the

‘Awakening in the Christian, Corporative State’ as our Chancellor has explained it to me. Look out of the window and tell me what you see.”

The puzzled councillors obeyed, and one of them said : “ Well, I only see the village church as usual, with a very old woman going into it and a beggar standing outside it, holding out his hat in his hand.”

“ Exactly,” said the mayor. “ Now, come here in a year’s time and look out of that window, and you will see ten churches with ten very old women going into them and dozens of beggars standing outside with their hats in their hands. That, as the Chancellor told me, will be Austria’s ‘Awakening in the Corporative State’.”

The intelligent Schuschnigg remained almost to the end a prisoner of his upbringing, of his devotion to his predecessors and the tragic circumstances of his assuming office which made it seem a sacred duty to continue along their path, although he must have realised at times its unwisdom. Schuschnigg appeared at his very best during the last weeks when, too late he saw the light, and at the very start, when he stepped fearlessly into the breach, suppressed the Nazi revolt with energy and determination, hanged the murderer of his friend and twelve of the traitors to Austria, who had been ringleaders in the murderous plot, thrust aside the claims of the dilettante Starhemberg for the Chancellorship and defied the plotting of Fey. But then he settled down to do his duty by the evil tradition he had inherited from Dollfuss—trying to stem the rising flood of Brown tyranny without accepting the aid of “ Red ” Republican democracy. On the contrary, he suppressed it vigorously as treason.

## CHAPTER XIII

### CONSPIRATORS AND TWO CONCENTRATION CAMPS

SINCE STARHEMBERG'S POLITICAL COMPASS SWUNG ROUND again after the Dollfuss assassination in August. At a reception on the Ballhausplatz (which was still packed with troops in fighting equipment and protected by strands of barbed wire outside), he spoke to me pretty openly about Germany's guilt.

"We are dealing with political bandits and terrorists, all the more dangerous because the organisers beyond the frontier are out of our reach. They have at their disposal sums of money which we, the loyal Austrians, cannot command because of the narrow limits of our budget. They have at their disposal the wealth of a nation of sixty millions. I know from Germany that every preparation has been made to rush the Austrian Legion to the frontier again at a favourable opportunity. Von Papen's appointment is no guarantee of peace; we have learned by experience to trust no promises from Germany. We have proved to the hilt the complicity of German circles in the events of July 25th; I am not going to try to establish now just how high up the responsibility in Germany reaches." But Starhemberg still refused to commit himself either way in the Habsburg question.

"The idea of Habsburg Restoration", he said, "is no more immediate than when I discussed it with you last February. Of course I and ninety per cent. of the country with me, including even our enemies, the Socialists and Communists, would prefer a Habsburg restoration to Hitler's triumph; so, I believe, would those enemies of Habsburg, the Little Entente States. But this country is not in a condition to-day which would justify asking anyone to occupy its throne." A friend of Schuschnigg later put Schuschnigg's rather similar views on the Habsburgs to me much better. "Schuschnigg is, of course, a traditionalist and monarchist at heart," he said, "but just because of his devotion to the ex-Imperial House, he would never experiment

with a restoration. One cannot restore the same monarch twice, and when Otto comes back, it must be to stay. That is why Schuschnigg is determined to bear the brunt of the battle alone, and to invite Otto to return only as a consolidation of his own work in pacifying Austria." That was getting pretty near to the truth, and it is only necessary to add that Schuschnigg, well aware of the challenge to many powerful factors at home and abroad which a restoration would have involved, kept it up his sleeve as a last card to play against the Nazi menace.

Had Otto had all the qualities of a leader and ruler with which his friends credited him, he would surely have come to Vienna in the last tortured weeks of Austria's life under the daily increasing Hitler menace as a private citizen, and have staked all on the results. By doing nothing he threw away even the desperate chance that was his, thus fully justifying the constant standpoint of the Left that it was useless to play with the delusion that Otto could ever be an alternative to Hitler worth considering. The Little Entente took the same view. Both as Foreign Minister and as President of the Czechoslovak Republic, Dr. Beneš told me more than once that the idea of Habsburg as a bulwark against Hitler was a delusion.

"If the old Emperor Francis Joseph, with all his political experience and the resources of an Empire of fifty-three millions at his command, could not, with all his hatred of the Prussians, avoid becoming a tool of Germany, what hope could there be for young Otto to hold out at the head of a little State of six millions with a high percentage opposed to him?" Czechoslovakia's wise leader said.

One of the greatest obstacles to the fulfilment of the dreams of Austrian Legitimists was the personality of the ambitious ex-Empress Zita, who would have been satisfied with nothing less as final objective than the recovery of the whole pre-war monarchy. Another was the narrow Clerical upbringing of Otto, which must have imbued him with just that type of Catholic intolerance which so many Austrians hated in the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg regime.

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The energy with which Schuschnigg suppressed the Nazi revolt in the provinces and the absolute failure of the plans for a rising in Vienna demoralised the underground Nazi movement for at least a year. An Austrian Nazi leader whom I knew well, belonging to a much more dangerous type than the open terrorists, admitted the complete demoralisation to me in

the winter of 1934. Like Seyss-Inquart, Glaise Horstenau, and others who played Nazi Germany's game while wearing up to the last the cloak of Catholicism and good Austrianism, he preferred to be called a *betont Nationaler*—a "Pronounced National"—rather than a Nazi. He told me that as many as ten per cent. of the whole Nazi strength had fled to Yugoslavia alone, apart from those who had escaped to Germany. The Yugoslav Government promptly offered the hospitality to these Austrian traitors which in 1938 it refused to Austrian patriots and unoffending Jews, partly out of hostility to Schuschnigg because of his Legitimist leanings, and partly because the economic tie-up with Germany, which the slick M. Stojadinovitch was to perfect a couple of years later with the aid of Dr. Schacht, was already beginning.

My Nazi acquaintance told me that Schuschnigg was already discussing the question of Nazi appeasement with a certain Pronounced National, an Austrian civil engineer, named Anton Rheintaler, a friend of Hess and Darré in Germany, but allegedly opposed to Habicht. Rheintaler was put forward in the so-called "Rheintaler action", a respectable stalking-horse under cover of which the defeated and discredited Nazis might be able to stage a come-back. The beans were spilled prematurely, however, by a popular boulevard paper, the *Telegraf*, and Schuschnigg had to cease all discussions with Rheintaler; even without this they would probably have come to nothing. Schuschnigg received him with icy coldness and great suspicion—naturally, since he found himself surrounded by treachery even after the revolt. One of the most disquieting cases of this at the time came to light with the arrest of Dr. Franz Sonnleithner, who was at the head of one of the principal Security departments. He was caught in the act of posting highly confidential information to Germany concerning the defence of the State against Nazi plots, and was proved to be in the pay of the German espionage service. The Nazi lawyer who defended him at the secret trial at which he was sentenced to four years' imprisonment asked me to allow myself to be nominated by him as one of the four persons permitted by law to be present in court to see fair play, telling me that if I would agree and subsequently disregard the oath of secrecy I should have to take, I should get hold of a marvellous exclusive story showing the complicity of members of the Government in Nazi intrigues which I could publish abroad in some newspaper with which I was not known to be connected.

The confidence felt by a number of leading Nazis at this period that I might prove a useful tool to them was really quite touching. This feeling was shared in some anti-Nazi quarters, and seemed to be based on the fact that in a book written some years before,\* I had tried to arouse public opinion to the criminal follies of Poincaré-imperialism during the occupation of the Ruhr and the attempted establishment of a dummy separatist republic in the Rheinland. After the February Counter-Revolution, a high official of the Austrian Foreign Office approached a member of the British Legation staff for a suggestion as to which impartial British journalist should be selected to visit the prisons and tell the world that the stories of the ill-treatment of Socialists were all untrue. When my name was suggested, the Government official replied:

"Gedye? Impossible. He is one of the worst Nazis amongst British journalists here". Apparently my Nazi admirers overlooked one little sentence in my book, written in 1929 to 1930, in which I warned against the dangers of a policy which was "causing a desperate nation to raise an obscure fanatic like Adolf Hitler to the threshold of a Fascist dictatorship under the device of 'force to meet force' ". Evidently also my dossier did not contain a signed article which I wrote in the *Contemporary Review* soon after Hitler came to power in 1933. In it I compared the attitude of France and Britain towards the defeated democratic German Republic after the War to that of two men, one of whom throughout a sultry summer day stones and torments a helpless dog on the chain, while the other occasionally says deprecatingly, "I don't think you ought to be so cruel—and also unwise", although doing nothing to interfere. I added, that when the wretched animal finally went mad under torment and broke its chains, that was not the moment for the inactive onlooker to run forward and try to pet and conciliate the mad dog with gifts. Whatever the dog's innocence and the fault of its tormentor, there was only one thing to be done to the dog, once it had gone mad.

I was not, of course, regarded as a rabid Nazi in all official quarters. My difficulties with the official Press Bureau—if difficulties is the right word to apply to a system of soft soap and superficial charm which concealed a steady refusal to afford any facilities, and which, when one complained, muffled complaints in a vast mass of cotton-wool verbiage and excuses—came from

\* "The Revolver Republic" (Arrowsmith).

the opposite quarter. I had not minced words in my dispatches about the Heimwehr preparations for the Counter-Revolution at any time, and when during the fighting of February 1934 the B.B.C. asked me to give a broadcast on the situation, I warned them that the Government was likely to refuse me facilities, and took the precaution of telephoning them my whole manuscript two hours before they approached the Austrian Broadcasting Company. As I expected, there was no direct refusal to be got out of General Director Ceija of the Ravag, but in the end the studio was "not available". I told Ceija on the telephone that a straightforward refusal would have looked much better than the "sabotageing" by him and Ludwig of the talk, and roused him to fury by the information that it had already been telephoned to London and would be read out there if I did not come through at the time fixed. On this occasion the B.B.C. stuck to its guns and my manuscript was duly read. But when in the following April the B.B.C. asked me to give a talk again and the Austrians refused outright to let me speak, although I offered to cross to Czechoslovakia and give the talk from there the B.B.C. thought that this might "not be quite wise", and submitted to the Austrian censorship, asking various other of my colleagues to speak in my place. With fine loyalty they all decided at a meeting of the Anglo-American Press Association in Vienna to boycott the radio as long as the radio boycotted me. A question was put down in the House on the subject, but finally the B.B.C. sent out a "safe man", one of their own officials, who, after a couple of days in Vienna, was able to tell the British public all about the Austrian situation.

It was not so very long after this that queer things began to happen to my mail. Quite a number of persons never received letters which I had written them, and still more complained of getting no acknowledgment of letters which I had never received. One day I had to go to Athens on a big story. It was my first trip, and a friend of mine living in the next postal district in Vienna handed in to be sent me by express mail a fat envelope containing letters of introduction for use among Ministers and officials down there. The letter never came. This was too much. As an experiment, I posted to myself on seven successive days at seven different post-offices, with a witness in each case, very fat letters containing pages of fishing catalogues and sheets torn from local newspapers, all of which



I marked with cabalistic signs and mysterious underlinings. Not one of them arrived. On the eighth day I took quite a little trouble over a letter addressed to myself. In addition to the usual cabalistically marked cuttings, it contained the contents of two bottles of sneezing powder, so powerful that despite all my care in emptying them into the envelope, my secretary began to weep bitterly at her desk several yards away and my dog at the other end of the room to cough furiously. To add to the effect, I inserted a little machine, the name of which I do not know but which I onomatopœically christened a "B-r-r-r-upp". It consisted of a semicircle of brass wire with a strip of elastic fastened to the ends, on which was threaded a piece of stout cardboard. The elastic being twisted some sixty times and the whole carefully inserted in the envelope, it was guaranteed to unwind itself with startling rapidity and a loud "B-r-r-upp" on the envelope being opened, and ensure a wide and generous distribution of the sneezing powder.

Years before in an expansive moment the Vienna secret police had shown me their *cabinet noir*, where the mails were tampered with. It was a tiny, stuffy room, with all windows tightly sealed in Austrian official fashion, with six people sitting close together over a table examining the contents of suspected letters. I passed a tense twenty-four hours, dreading that all my preparations—which had included the insertion of a slip inscribed "Next meeting-place for the National Socialist Democratic Communist Bombthrowing Fascist group, 4 a.m."—it was bitter November weather—"end terminus of the Mauer Tramway by the Vienna Forest. Bring your bombs for practice"—would be for naught. But morning came and all was well—the letter was never delivered to me. I could hardly hope that detectives really had gone to that chilly rendezvous, but anything was possible with such idiotic espionage as this to which I was being subjected. At least I had the assurance that half a dozen postal spies were going to suffer all the pains of a very bad cold in the head for a good half-hour. Then I went to my Legation with all the data of the tests—omitting the final letter—which I had made, and succeeded in producing a protest and semi-apology from the Austrian authorities. My mail was never tampered with again, and a friend in the Chancellor's Department told me at a reception a few weeks later: "Please, dear Gedye, let us know at once if anyone tries to stop you getting your copies of the illegal *Arbeiterzeitung* through the mail

again. We have given strict instructions to the police to leave your illegal correspondence alone in future. It is far more nuisance for us to have diplomatic complaints to deal with than it is if you are able to read Otto Bauer's words of unwisdom in peace."

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Schuschnigg made a great mistake in delaying the release of the Socialist leaders, men and women, arrested in February for many months after the July Putsch of the Nazis, although the Socialists had refused to give the latter any support. A lot of the responsibility for this lay with Major Fey and the obsession of his very limited mental powers with the stupid phrase "Austro-Bolshevists" applied to the great Austrian (reformist) Social-Democratic movement. The second Heimwehr leader, Starhemberg, on the other hand, came more and more under Italian influence, and concentrated on combating the Nazi peril, making references from time to time to the Socialists, including even the Schutzbund, which almost amounted to an intelligent appreciation of realities. The stumbling-block was the reiterated condemnation of the men's leaders which always marred these would-be conciliatory remarks of Starhemberg. The masses knew that although they might have been several times ill led, they had never been betrayed by their leaders, and were not prepared to betray them. Nor had they the least confidence in Starhemberg. It was admitted that in the February fighting, when he commanded the Heimwehr attacking the Socialists who defended the town of Steyr, he proved a chivalrous enemy as compared with Fey, but in politics nobody took him seriously. Schuschnigg found himself playing a pretty lone hand. He knew that there could be no solution without broadening the basis of his Government. Catholicism and aloofness from the common herd made it seemingly impossible for him to find his way to the Socialists, who for their part were in no mood to sue for terms from the man who had been Dollfuss' Minister of Justice. Starhemberg was working against his wish for a hundred per cent. secular Fascism instead of the sixty-forty Clerico-Fascism which Schuschnigg wanted. Fey, with his Vienna Heimwehr, which included a high percentage of semi-Nazi thugs, was not to be trusted after the events of July 25th and his attitude when Schuschnigg formed his Cabinet. Schuschnigg apologists now put the blame on the Socialists for not having recognised Nazism as so great a peril

as to give unconditional support to Schuschnigg. That is bad logic. As often as I spoke to Socialist "Illegals", they insisted on the greater peril of the Nazis. But always they argued that the masses would never follow them in an alliance with the "bloodhounds" of February 1934, unless the latter reversed their whole policy. Further, they knew that the whole programme of the "Christian", Corporative State was so lifeless and so hated that adhesion to it would be the emergence of rats from temporarily safe holes to board a sinking ship. They preferred to stay put, and prepare an eventual come-back against the Nazis, after the triumph of the latter.

Austria was no longer a Republic. It was governed dictatorially by Schuschnigg on the authority of the Constitution imposed by Dollfuss and pushed through a rump parliament from which the representatives of forty-two per cent. of the people, the Social-Democrats, had been quite illegally excluded on May 1st, 1934. For the preamble of the old Austrian Constitution which declared that Austria was a Republic in which all power emanated from the people, a new preamble was substituted which ran: "In the name of God Almighty, from whom all laws emanate, the Austrian people receives its Constitution for a Christian, German and Federal State on a Corporative basis". The word Republic was thus dropped and Austria declared to be "a Federal State". The Constitution was so drawn up that therein was nothing which could prevent it from serving, with a few changes, as the Constitution of an undemocratic monarchy. Dollfuss, who had suppressed with police and troops the last properly summoned session of Parliament, called this rump assembly together to commit suicide on his instructions. I watched the melancholy spectacle from the Press Gallery, and noted Dollfuss' extreme nervousness. Only the Pan-Germans protested against the "meeting of Parliament to legalise twelve months' illegalities and approve a dictated Constitution, the contents of which nobody knows". The Parliament, they declared, had been summoned quite unconstitutionally. The Pan-Germans pointed out that owing to the enforced absence of the Socialists there was not even a quorum. Then they marched out, asserting that the passing of the Constitution was merely a resolution of a private gathering of the Clerical Party, not of Parliament.

In the absence of Parliament the political life of the nation developed underground. The Socialists, as the biggest party

in the country, had naturally the most efficient underground organisation. The Vienna Forest became the chief substitute for the deserted Parliament building on the Ringstrasse. Sunday after Sunday, Socialists gathered by appointment at various rendezvous in the woods, posted their sentinels to avoid a surprise attack by mounted police and debated the problem of the overthrow of Fascism and combating Nazism. The system of "lightning speeches" was introduced both in factory yards and in the country. They worked like this. Leaving a popular restaurant in the Vienna Forest one Sunday, I saw a working man in leather shorts suddenly jump up on to a tree-stump and begin :

"Comrades, despite Fascist and Clerical terror in our country you see that we Socialists and Trades Unionists can still give you a message." He spoke for three minutes, apparently unguarded. Then someone in the outskirts of the crowd shouted : "Finish". In the next moment the speaker just was not there. In a few seconds Heimwehr with rifles and bayonets came running up, but there was nothing to see—just a melting crowd of harmless excursionists walking on their way.

Getting out of a tramcar one day in a working-class district, I found a leaflet slipped into my hands, headed "The best way of shaving with Blank's safety razors". Only when I got to the second page of the instructions did I discover that I had a piece of illegal literature in my hand, for the document continued : "What you have read so far is merely a camouflage to enable the Austrian Revolutionary Socialists to tell you how the fight against Black and Brown Fascism is continuing". An elaborate organisation provided for the importation from Czechoslovakia of the Party's illegal weekly, the *Arbeiterzeitung*. It was brought over the frontier by professional smugglers who had to be highly paid, just as they would have been for bringing in silk stockings or whiskey. From them the idealists of the Party took over the huge bundles of newspapers, rushed them in motor-lorries to secret central depots, whence they were divided and subdivided until at last the underground colporteur put them in the hands of secret subscribers.

One summer Sunday I had the remarkable experience of witnessing an illegal parade of the now largely Communist "Autonomous Defence Corps", successor to the Socialist "Republican Defence Corps", or *Schutzbund*. A woman whom I knew to be an underground worker and suspected to be a

Communist agreed, after extracting the most binding promises of discretion and secrecy, to enable me to see one of these parades. I met her by appointment at an underground station in the Inner City at 6 a.m. with instructions not to speak to her, but to get into the same underground car. In the suburbs I changed into a motor-bus where she left me, after a young girl in *Dirndl* costume whom neither she nor I knew, but who recognised her from a given description, had smiled at me and asked if I were going her way. At the end station another guide picked me up with a nod and accompanied me in a tram which went to the fringe of the Vienna Forest. This guide did not know the final rendezvous, but after looking around for some ten minutes said to me, "We have to follow that courting couple ahead". The forest was full of couples and parties of excursionists going in all directions; only a small proportion like ourselves were of course bent on anything but pleasure. Eventually, on the top of a piece of well-wooded rising ground, we found the Defence Corps men gradually assembling. They came in twos and fours from all directions, apparently sauntering along; the pickets posted all around this copse looking out over the fields appeared to the uninitiated as loving couples lost in one another's arms beneath the trees.

At last, when the cadre battalion had been fallen in, a burning-eyed workers' leader addressed them in flaming words on the cruelties of the regime, the ever-present peril of the Nazis, the sacredness of working-class unity against oppressors from every camp and the duty of holding out underground until the moment came to strike. Then came something which I had not expected.

"Men of the XIIth (Kiroff) Illegal Battalion of the Autonomous Schutzbund", their commander shouted, "you are to receive to-day your colours secretly stitched for you by the 'ladies' of your district". Yes, these were Communists all right—but Viennese Communists, liable to an occasional lapse from the Party Line into quite unorthodox gallantry. From four rucksacks a huge red flag was taken in four sections, which were quickly buttoned together. It bore the name of Kiroff and the number of the battalion, stitched on by the girls whose leaders now stepped forward to present the flag (which had meanwhile been attached to a young sapling ready cut) to the battalion's officers.

Then came the most thrilling moment, when, despite the

danger evoked even in this lonely part of the forest, of attracting patrolling Heimwehr and mounted police, the battalion sang two verses of the International with upraised clenched fists while a photographer took a number of pictures of the parade—from behind, in such a way that not a single face was visible! After the command “Dismiss” the flag was parted again into its integral segments and, like snowflakes on a hot plate, the cadre battalion melted in all directions. In two minutes the patch of forest was deserted again save for the birds. A couple of months later I heard that a copy of one of the photographs had been found on one of the men who was arrested by chance, and was pinned up in every police station in Vienna. It did not enable the police to catch a single further member of the Kiroff Battalion.

One soon got used to being called up on the telephone and hearing a voice which one could have sworn was that of a respected former member of Parliament, called perhaps Raminger, introducing its owner as “Mr. Smith of London”, and asking for an appointment in a café or at some frequented street corner. A few weeks later the same voice might be declaring itself as that of “M. Emil Chautemps of Brussels”, and a little later “Baron von Stein”. Of course, when the owner turned up it was the same old Raminger all right, working in his capacity of “Press liaison officer” between the underground movement and the foreign Press. Then one day another voice on the telephone would say that he spoke for M. Chautemps, “who has been taken ill with the prevailing epidemic”. With him one had at the start to be very cautious, lest he were an *agent provocateur* of the Government. When he had established his bonafides, one learned, of course, that the “prevailing epidemic” was either prison or concentration camp, frequently with the complication of beating up by police or Heimwehr. The Nazis operated by much the same methods and were liable to fall victims to the same epidemic. But in their cases the attacks were infinitely milder, full recovery very rapid and without “complications”, for often those who had to treat the “cases” were secretly in their ranks.

There were frequent mass round-ups of the Reds, and those against whom nothing could be proved were sent for indefinite periods to concentration camps without trial. A particularly scandalous system maintained almost to the end was that whereby a man was punished several times for the same offence.



Perhaps his home would be searched and two copies of the *Arbeiterzeitung* and the *Rote Fahne* found in it. First he would be left months in prison without trial. At some time during this period he would be marched before a police commissar and told: "I have decided to give you twenty months for Socialist activities". Sometimes he never even saw the commissar, but got a piece of paper with the sentence handed in to his cell. At last he would come before the courts for a regular trial and be sentenced perhaps to the maximum for Socialist activity for having the *Arbeiterzeitung* and the maximum for Communist activity for having the *Rote Fahne*. These sentences served, he would be "released" from the court prisons and handed over to the police for disposal. Then the commissar would give him a second sentence on account of his *Rote Fahne*. This served, the commissar could either release him, give him six months' concentration camp without trial or just consign him to the concentration camp until further orders.

On one occasion I was given the opportunity of seeing the famous concentration camp for Nazis in Wöllersdorf. At that time there were no Socialists or Communists there, save for an advance guard of three Socialists, but later all three groups were provided with different compounds in the same camp. Eventually a fourth group was added—that of the members of illegal trades unions.

The Nazi prisoners, who were in constant communication with the outside world, had been making a tremendous outcry abroad about their sufferings in the camp. No doubt in the dreary days of winter it was nearly as uncomfortable there as in the military hutments of Kitchener's Army in winter during the War. But in April 1934 life there was as easy, if boring, as it would be in the hutments of soldiers practically free from parades. There were no cells, no plank beds. All the inmates, mostly young men, had photos of their best girls, their relations or of (definitely Aryan) film stars pinned up on the walls. There was no restriction on smoking. I talked to the Nazis quite freely without the presence of any members of the guard. They were clamorous in protests about the food supply, although they were allowed to procure their own supplies from the canteen. The administration of anti-aphrodisiacs in tea was a great grievance. There was no hard labour to be done, as in the German camps. The inmates had to rise at six, clean their own hutments, do one hour's compulsory gymnastics



and put out their lights by 9 p.m. Otherwise the time was their own, and seemed to be devoted chiefly to football, sun-bathing or reading under the trees. The most seriously-held grievance which all the Nazis put before me was that community singing was forbidden. As their only desire was to sing prohibited Nazi songs, this was hardly surprising.

While I talked to the Nazis, the Camp Commandant approached, and immediately the Nazis staged for my benefit what they called a "Nigger Revolt", as Nazis outside had told me in advance would be done. It was led by a young bearded Nazi, who made a rush at the Camp Commandant, shouting that his mismanagement and incompetence were a scandal. "You ought to be expelled from your post," he shouted to the Commandant, and the mob of Nazis chorused: "Bravo, bravo!" Red, embarrassed and apologetic to the prisoners, the Commandant hurried me away from the disorderly demonstration.

The whole scene was in the greatest contrast imaginable to the little I had been allowed to see when Herr Himmler, head of the Gestapo, had allowed me, the only journalist to be accorded this privilege, to visit the terrible camp at Dachau in 1933. Dachau had just been started, and only a few of the disused sheds in the vast complex of buildings (later to house thousands of unfortunates) enclosed by a high wall running right round the complex were occupied. In addition to my permit from Munich, I had to obtain at the gates a stamped and signed brassard and another special permit to be surrendered on leaving. Accompanied by heavily armed S.S. guards, I was taken to the inner circle of barbed wire and live electric wire, within which was the prison proper. The occasion was the Führer's birthday, and I had first been offered an opportunity of seeing how happy the inmates were to celebrate it in the morning. Apparently the Nazis subsequently felt doubtful whether even their terrible discipline could succeed in forcing the necessary parody of happiness into their victims' faces to convince a journalist, for they telephoned me in the morning that the "birthday celebrations" were after all to be private, but that I could be taken down in the afternoon. The young Prussian Nazi in command, accompanied by five of his brown-shirted staff, came with me round the prison. The unhappy prisoners, close-cropped like convicts, were packed like sardines in three or four tiers of box beds. I knew that the hard-labour conditions imposed daily were terrible, and that it was for this

reason that the holiday of the Führer's birthday had been selected for my visit. The Commandant declined to show me the section reserved for "obstinate" cases, saying that it was part of the punishment of these men not to see anyone from the outer world. He told me, however, that I was perfectly free to go anywhere I liked in the rest of the camp and to put what questions I liked to the prisoners.

Each hut had a prisoner appointed as senior, and as we entered he cried out in a voice partly harsh and partly, it seemed to me, hysterical with fear, to call the men to attention. In the first hut I took the Commandant at his word, and asked if I might speak to a little old man at the far end of the hut who would be well out of earshot of my large Nazi escort. He gave prompt permission, and I walked through the prisoners, whose eyes followed me with that strained look of fear of the unknown to be seen in those of cattle penned in the slaughterhouse. When I reached the little man I saw that his eyes were bulging wider than ever and his face had turned an ashen colour. I glanced quickly over my shoulder. My whole Nazi escort had followed and were ranged close behind me. One could not put a fellow human being in such mortal peril as to ask him a single dangerous question for the sake of a journalistic story. As the only way out of the dilemma I shouted at him in as harsh a voice as those of the Nazis themselves, "Do you want to make any complaints concerning your treatment here?" and received the expected answer in broken tones: "No, none at all". That put an end to such faint hopes as I had ever entertained of throwing light on the truth in Dachau, for wherever I went to speak to a prisoner, the Nazis stood beside me.

All the huts had evidently been specially prepared for me to see, but in one something went wrong with a very special item arranged for my benefit. When the inmates were called to attention as usual and the Nazi Commandant had told them to "carry on", there was the usual dead silence. Then I heard one of my Nazi escort saying beneath his breath to the senior prisoner: "What's that man doing who ought to be playing the mandoline? Tell him to get on with it at once." And in a moment the supposedly gay twanging of a mandoline resounded from one of the upper bunks. To me it was the most horrible music I have ever heard in my life.

Three prisoners only I encountered who seemed without fear.

Two were tall, fair-haired boys working outside the huts, who looked like young Nazis themselves and spoke up frankly to the Commandant, saying that their arrest had been a case of mistaken identity and that they were anxious to join the Party themselves. He promised investigation. The other man who did not look frightened was the enormous prison cook, a Communist who had once shot in the Diet at a Socialist suspected of betraying the Revolution. The prisoners were being given a good soup to celebrate Hitler's birthday, and perhaps it was the appetising smell of his cauldrons which made him oblivious to his fate.

"How long is he in for?" I asked the Commandant, who shrugged his shoulders and said: "I don't suppose Lindtner will ever see the outside world again."

"But are there no sentences—are these men never to be tried?" I naïvely asked him.

"Only those who have been guilty of some particular offence," was the answer. "Some may be out in a few months, some in a few years, when we have taught them what the new Germany is going to be. But the incurables——"

The sentence and my visit were cut short by three of the guards of the outer walls hurrying up, stopping dead six paces from the Commandant, and then advancing right up to him with a goose-step of such exaggerated rigidity that but for the horrible air of Dachau I think I should have been unable to avoid bursting out laughing.

"Herr Commandant," one reported, "we have just arrested three Communists. They must be extremely dangerous Communists, because we found them trying to look over the wall into the camp." The Commandant dismissed me to the gates in charge of an orderly-clerk, in order to interrogate his new prisoners. And it was then that I learned just a couple of things about Dachau which had not been prepared for me.

"Have you seen our machine-gun posts all round the barbed wire?" the orderly asked me, "and the double patrol-walk between the electrified wire which it is death to touch?" He showed me a few of these treasures of the camp, adding with a grin: "A week ago we shot four of these savages who attempted to run away,"—he looked at me very hard at this—"while on a working party inside the camp."

There was one thing in common between Wöllersdorf and Dachau. The Nazis seemed thoroughly to enjoy both.

## CHAPTER XIV

### REVOLUTIONARIES AT PLAY

**D**URING THE DING-DONG STRUGGLE WHICH SCHUSCHNIGG waged whole-heartedly against the Socialists and alternately vigorously and half-heartedly against the Nazis right up to his first surrender to them in July 1936, he found time to consolidate his personal position within the only political body tolerated in Austria, the Fatherland Front, and in the Government by disembarassing himself of those two uncertain allies, Fey and Starhemberg. The coup against "Bloodhound Fey" as the Socialists called him was carried out by typical Schuschnigg methods—preparations made very gradually and with well-kept secrecy, every possible provision against failure made in advance, and then at the right moment a lightning stroke so swiftly and suavely carried through that the opponent found himself being thanked and rewarded for his great services to the State almost before he had any inkling that these had abruptly been ended. On the night of October 17th, after all preparations had been made, including the obtaining of the usual guarantees from Mussolini (whose nominee was Starhemberg for Heimwehr command in consequence of his distrust of Fey), Schuschnigg summoned a sudden Cabinet Council. With the backing of his Vice-Chancellor Starhemberg (who believed it would mean increased power for himself), he demanded that the various armed Fascist bodies in Austria, of which the Heimwehr were the principal, should immediately be fused into a "Fatherland Front Militia" modelled on the lines of the Italian Fascist Militia. Outside the Council Chamber, police heavily armed with carbines and machine-guns had been rushed to all the public buildings, railway lines and main roads were guarded and an unobtrusive guard set over Fey's Heimwehr headquarters. Fey strongly opposed the demand for fusion of the Heimwehr, which he saw clearly would mean the end of his influence. It was only the night before that Fey had bombastically held a torchlight parade of his own men, nominally to celebrate the third anniver-

sary of his becoming a Cabinet Minister, but in reality to let Schuschnigg and Starhemberg see what they were up against. Meantime Schuschnigg had learned alarming details of talks between Fey and the slippery von Papen and accelerated the blow.

Suddenly Schuschnigg dismissed the Cabinet Council, saying abruptly that he was going to President Miklas to ask him to dismiss the whole Cabinet and accept a new list which he had drawn up. Fey had been anticipating trouble later, but Schuschnigg had been much too quick for him; at the Council, Schuschnigg had mentioned with apparent casualness that he had strengthened the garrison of Vienna by bringing in 4000 men of Starhemberg's Lower Austrian Heimwehr and was increasing these to 7000. The obliging Herr Miklas of course complied, having been in the plot throughout, and within an hour Fey was out on the streets together with his friends Neustaedter-Stuermer and Karwinsky; the faintly democratic Lower Austrian peasant leader Reither was also dropped. Starhemberg's share in the triumph included the appointment as Minister of Finance of his friend Dr. Draxler, successful lawyer to himself and Fritz Mandl. The amiable Dr. Draxler, who for some reason took a very friendly interest in me from the date when I sent a message revealing some details of his financial plans in the London market which he was anxious to keep concealed, was among the large number—in June 1938 Herr Buerckel modestly and entirely untruthfully gave the figure as only 150—of the first Austrian victims to be sent to Dachau. Thus fell Fey—and very softly. Schuschnigg and Starhemberg had arranged a bed of roses to receive him in the shape of an appointment as Chairman of Directors of the First Danube Steamship Company. Fey relaxed amidst the perfume of prosperity and abandoned his Fascist thugs to be absorbed by Starhemberg's.

A great wave of persecution and arrests marked the first anniversary of the February Counter-Revolution. But this did not prevent the underground organisations of the Socialists from organising an impressive number of small demonstrations, including one to which the police found it hard to take objection—the extinguishing of all lights in the tenement houses at 9 p.m. on the anniversary of the shelling. After all, it was difficult to forbid tired workers to retire at this hour, and impossible to establish which of them were tired and which taking part in a

demonstration of mourning. Right on the heels of this arrived the Prince of Wales—afterwards Edward VIII, now Duke of Windsor—for one of his several pleasure visits to Vienna. On his last day he embarrassed the Clerico-Fascist Government terribly by demanding to be shown the great monument of the Socialists, the model workers' homes which they had put up right round the city and which the Government were trying hard to make everyone forget. Quite without invitation I attached myself to the Prince's suite for this trip, which was the only politically interesting part of his whole visit to Vienna, although, of course, columns had to be written by the correspondents every day about his doings. The Fascist Major Lahr and the Clerical Anti-Semite Herr Kresse, two people nominated Vice-Burgomasters after the Counter-Revolution, called to fetch him from his hotel. Before leaving for the trip the Prince remarked to his barber at the Hotel Bristol:

"You will never guess what I am going to do to-day. I am going to have a look at those famous houses your Socialists put up for the workers."

"Then your Royal Highness will, of course, be going to the Rathaus first?" asked the barber.

"Rathaus? Good God, no!" the Prince answered. "What on earth would my workers think of me in London if I went to that place which the Fascists took away from the Socialists? No, the municipal authorities will have to fetch me here."

They did, and of course pumped Heimwehr-Fascist propaganda hard into him throughout the morning. The Prince received it all with a glassy stare, and here and there a sudden question which quite put the plausible Major Lahr off his stroke. In the Karl Marx-Hof I heard him drumming into the Prince the usual stuff about "ferro-concrete fortresses", long-prepared "machine-gun nests" and Austro-Bolshevists, the only basis for which was that the narrow windows of w.c.'s made excellent loopholes for machine-gunners defending the buildings. The Prince listened politely but apparently coldly, firing off abrupt questions about bathing accommodation and communal laundries. Lahr was only deterred when, in the midst of some of his most blood-curdling stuff about that *méchant animal*, the Austrian worker, who had dared to defend himself with machine-guns against the Fascist attack, the Prince jerked out: "Yes, yes, I know all about that. But do tell me, Major, where did you

put that battery of howitzers which knocked all those holes in the left wing? ”

It was not the first time that the Prince had been an *enfant terrible* about this building. It so happened that at the time of the shelling the Austrians had put on a wonderful “ Austrian Exhibition ” in London. Baron Frankenstein was taking the Prince round and showing him some beautiful photographs of baroque churches and palaces in Vienna, when the Prince of Wales shot out : “ Hasn’t Your Excellency got a photograph of the Karl Marx-Hof put up here? ” As the Karl Marx-Hof at that time was in parts a gaping ruin, there was quite an outburst of coughing amongst his Austrian and British escort and a hurried move was made to a different part of the exhibition.

In the Goethe-Hof the Prince was taken in to see a carefully selected worker’s home, occupied by one of the Fascists who had here and there been put in as prominent Socialists were ejected. I stayed down in the courtyard, and soon a lot of sullen-faced workers’ wives collected to see what was going on. One of them asked me angrily if the police had gone in to arrest Revolutionary Socialists again. I told them that it was only a visit by the Prince of Wales. The reaction was interesting. There was not a trace of that sycophantic fawning so deplorably obvious amongst the Viennese bourgeoisie, nor was there any inverted snobbism. Danger from the detectives standing around was ignored. “ If the Prince von Vahless wants to see the truth ”, said one full-bosomed washerwoman, “ let’s take him into the communal bathroom. Since these blasted Fascists prevented us from running our own lives here the place has become a pigsty.”

“ Just let me speak to him, and I’ll show him where they killed my husband and two comrades of the Defence Corps twelve months ago ”, said another.

“ We’ve no use for Princes ”, shouted another, “ but at least your Prince comes to see how we live, whereas our Prince ” (meaning Starhemberg) “ only came to shell our homes ”. Another two minutes and the Prince would have become the centre of an impromptu anti-Fascist demonstration. But luckily for the decorum of the powers that be in Britain, he emerged abruptly and jumped into his car before the women could start on him. Those convinced anti-Monarchists, the underground Socialist leaders, were so impressed by the Prince’s



personality that when I happened to mention to one of them the true anecdote about his talk with his barber he said : " What a fine paragraph for our illegal Press ! But it would not be fair to use it—it might get the chap into trouble with his Government."

Soon all underground Socialist Vienna was seething with admiration for the Prince because he wore in the buttonhole of his dinner-jacket at night resorts a red carnation, traditional badge of Austrian Socialism. Stories grew up of how the Austrian police had asked him to desist, and he had replied : " Nonsense—I stand by the workers of Vienna, and I am going to show it ". It was a pretty delusion concerning one of the Prince's dressy little habits. Needless to say, all the sympathy he had won vanished overnight when he made his last appearance in the limelight with his disastrous tour to Germany as guest of those whom the Austrian Socialists recognised as the deadliest enemies of the working classes anywhere to-day, the Nazis.

In the intervals of serious Socialist propaganda, the Revolutionary Socialists managed to perpetrate some first-class hoaxes on the Dictatorship, carried out with real Viennese sardonic humour, which drove the humourless Fey in particular to fury. One or two I managed to smuggle out for my scrap-book past the Nazis on my expulsion from Austria. Here, for instance, is an invitation I received to the first "*Ball der Stadt Wien*" to be held during *Fashing*—Carnival—under the Fascist regime. The new masters of the land were extremely nervous about merry-making in the Rathaus, into which they had forced their way like burglars, ejecting and imprisoning the rightful occupants only five days before the first anniversary of the bloody Counter-Revolution. The invitation card, which I received in a fine crested envelope, ran as follows :

" Invitation  
to the

### BALL OF THE CITY OF VIENNA

which will be given on February 7th, 1935, by the leaders of Austrian Fascism, slaughterers and hangmen of world-wide fame. Every loyal helper in the building-up of this prison-state has promised to be present. The security of the guests against any irruption of the starving masses has been made absolutely certain by the employment of the armed forces and the arrest of several thousand revolutionaries.

"The necessary joyous atmosphere will be guaranteed by a richly-spread table and the transformation of all the halls of the great building into a fairy-world of blossoming flowers. The programme of festivities which has been drawn up in accordance with our invisible sympathies with the boundless miseries of the working population, will be spiced with a certain number of surprises.

"(Signed) THE FEBRUARY SLAUGHTERERS AND MURDERERS."

Every diplomat, consular official and prominent Viennese got one of these invitations as the first intimation that he was invited to the ball. The underground Socialists had purloined the official invitation list! The embarrassed authorities had to publish an indignant refutation of its genuineness, to the huge delight of the movement, which thus got further advertisement, and increased the mirth at the expense of the Fascists. The real invitation cards arrived two days later and fell distinctly flat. The reference to "certain surprises" caused all cellars and sewers beneath the Rathaus to be searched almost hourly for a Guy Fawkes, and the Ball itself to be so packed with detectives that the police were said to have been obliged to hire for them dress suits of even the earliest Francis Joseph vintage.

Here is another treasure—a perfectly imitated number of the Heimwehr organ *Der Heimatschützer*. Banner headlines across the front page quote from a (genuine) speech just delivered by Starhemberg:

"The Most Social State in the World. Our Führer Points the Way into the New Austria. The Programmatic Speech of Prince Starhemberg and the Working Classes."

With all the flamboyant style of the Heimwehr when coddling the workers, the paper starts most convincingly, praising the Leader's speech, with much "Heil Starhemberg", and urges the reader, as a true Heimwehr-man, to pass on the issue from man to man, and not selfishly to keep it, let alone throw it away. The speech glorifies two particularly hated Heimwehr strike-breaker leaders, and thanks God for the breakdown of the trades unions, "with their base materialism of increasing wages".

"Let us hear nothing of the class war," the Prince is then made to say, "for that idea serves only the interests of the workers". Parodying Goering's and Lueger's phrase, "Who is and is not a Jew is for me to decide", the Prince is made to declare, "What is social welfare, I decide alone. Let me hear no complaints about

under-payment of the Heimwehr comrades installed in the works of the Donawitz concern in place of dismissed Marxists. It is a matter of course that our worker comrades, trained to silent obedience in the Heimwehr ranks, will silently and gratefully accept whatever wages our employer-comrades can pay them, instead of the shamefully high Marxist-wages fixed in the bad old days by collective bargaining.

“ But do not think that I will tolerate capitalist exploitation. Remember how I shut down the firm of Kary for this offence. All their workers are now on the streets, and make this sacrifice gladly for the new, social Austria.

“ What is this nonsense about a need for free elections of shop stewards? I ask you—are there such elections in Italy, where our friend Mussolini is even now engaged in defending his system against the Marxist-Liberal English?

“ And now to old-age pensions.” (Long-continued applause and unending shouts of “ Heil Starhemberg.”) “ You know, worker-comrades, how, at the last change of government when I had decided not to employ him longer in the Government, I cared for the declining years of our comrade Major Fey. After three years’ service in the Government I caused him to be made Chairman of the Danube Steamship Company, and ordered that he should get there a minimum payment of 2500 Schillinge a month! I hope that you are duly grateful, and realise what minimum salaries your leaders think out for themselves in the new social State. What in comparison are the miserable half-pence secured for you by the Marxists in their collective agreements?

“ We have begun another great action. Worker and peasant comrades, you suffer all under the burden of debt. We leaders of the Heimwehr can feel for you in this. Comrade Fey, before and after his retirement, called our attention to his dislike of his own indebtedness. Thereupon the Government assumed the whole obligation and freed him of debt! You see, Comrades, how I care for you! Your anxieties are my anxieties, your money is my money; together we share good times and bad—mine the former, yours the latter.”

Foreign Minister Baron Berger-Waldenegg, leader of the Styrian Heimwehr and a slavish admirer of Italian Fascism, is then made to say :

“ As we here are true to our leader Starhemberg, so must all

Austria remain true to its leader, Benito Mussolini. We know from many protests that the Italophile policy of the Government is not wanted by the population, but we are an authoritarian State, in which nothing must happen that the population wants. We must hold out on our path of becoming a vassal State of Italy. Had the Negus only abased himself before the mighty Duce, there would have been no Abyssinian war."

The Governor of Styria and Secretary-General of the Fatherland Front, Stepan, is made to follow with a speech praising the work of "liberation from Marxism" of the gallant judges of Leoben Assize Court, "who refused to be scared out of imposing a minimum sentence of five years' penal servitude for the possession of a single illegal Socialist newspaper". The report ends: "The Leoben gathering broke up in the wildest enthusiasm; had Leader Starhemberg not been surrounded by a triple cordon of police, Heimwehr and troops, he would certainly have been carried off the field at the end".

Follows a heroic poem—"Workers' Greetings to the Führer", which, after four stanzas of unimpeachable Fascist sentiment, concludes:

"Mussolini's Imitator!  
Schuschnigg's loud-mouthed partner, thou  
Churchwards-squinting small dictator,  
Thy work shall be paid, we vow!  
  
To oppress and to enslave us  
Dost thou lead thy gang—the trend  
Of the future we won't discuss—  
Just predict thy sticky end."

Advertisements invite to the opening of the "Shell-shattered Ottakring Workers' Club—Preliminary service of dedication by Cardinal Archbishop Dr. Innitzer", and to borrow money from the Jewish moneylender whose transactions with the Anti-Semitic Prince Starhemberg had received great publicity, "Moritz Kohn, of Brünn—delays execution orders until clients have joined the Fascist Government—patronised by the highest aristocracy".

Another successful hoax was a letter on real official notepaper, furnished with a genuine rubber-stamp signature of the Police President, Dr. Skubl, setting forth that as the time of the police was entirely occupied with the arresting of Socialists, Communists and other anti-Fascists, it was the duty of the public

itself to keep down common crime. But to assure them that the political welfare of the State was well looked after and the huge sums spent on armaments against political opponents were justified, the public were invited to inspect at police headquarters any Sunday morning the vast armoury of tanks, machine-guns, rifles and gas appliances which the police had acquired to deal with political opponents. The irony of the original was not so blunt as this. All these hoaxes were so delicately devised as to be almost immediately comprehensible to the quick-witted and to incite their ridicule against the Dictatorship, yet to bemuse and befuddle the slow-witted into taking them seriously, and consequently making fools of themselves and the Socialists' opponents. That they were taken seriously is proved by the fact that the moment any of these hoaxes came to the ears of the police, radio and newspaper warnings against believing them were hastily broadcast, to the redoubled enjoyment of the authors.

Alas! many such treasures have been lost, destroyed in the sacrificial fires most newspaper-men had to light when the Nazis seized Vienna—or pocketed by the Gestapo on running through my cherished “personal file”—among them the fake programme issued to all leaders of the Fatherland Front throughout the country on the occasion of the great meeting in the Konzerthaus Saal when Starhemberg had planned to proclaim himself—a temporary swing-back to Legitimism—“Regent of Austria” for Otto. The trusting peasant leaders were urged—many complied—to present the document on arriving in Vienna at any of a long list of shops owned by Heimwehr supporters “where they could draw £1 10s. worth of goods free”, and offered free accommodation for longer or shorter periods at those Viennese establishments maintained for the convenience of casual or professional love affairs known as *Stunden Hotels*—“Hotels for the Hour”.

The details of the programme for the meeting itself included:

“8.30 a.m. Arrival of our all-beloved leader Prince Starhemberg, well screened from his devoted working-class followers by machine-guns and bayonets.

“8.50 a.m. The Fatherland Front leaders arise spontaneously from their seats to demand Starhemberg as Regent.

“10 a.m. Starhemberg from the balcony on the Ballhausplatz proclaims himself Regent of the country he has ruined.

“10.5–10.15 a.m. Spontaneous ovations by the nearest

masses half a mile away on the Ringstrasse, who by an ingenious device will be enabled to hear, see and enjoy the proceedings without being able to get within pistol-range of the beloved Führer."

Very gaily did some of these young " R.S.-ler " (as the Revolutionary Socialist organisers were—and are—known to the Viennese masses) and Communists play with their liberty, often with their lives, delighting the masses of their followers by the way they made circles around the bewildered police and slow-witted Heimwehr—until, of course, the almost inevitable day when there was some slip and the hoaxer disappeared under a five-year sentence. There was one young Revolutionary Socialist who simply could not keep the joke to himself when some good hoax had been pulled off. He would come to the surface from that queer, mediæval underworld where the "*Illegalen*" lived and moved, bubbling over with excitement, to tell me the latest. In that pure world it was necessary to unlearn the technical progress of the last century and a half. The "*Illegalen*" could use neither telegraph, telephone nor post. The Communists had—and still have under the Nazis—a fully worked out postal service of their own. In each district there is a man known as "the letter-box". Local leaders know when the next "collection" will take place and make sure to catch it with their dispatches. Only, instead of being hourly, collections are weekly or even monthly. The "collector" brings the letters to one of the most important men in the underground organisation, the "postmaster". He sorts his mail according to cities and countries and hands it over to the appropriate courier when he comes around. All this, of course, is known to the police, and their great ambition is to locate a "postmaster". He is left to continue his work for months at a time while the police keep unobtrusive watch, identify couriers and collectors, and then at the appropriate moment when the "postmaster" has full mail-bags awaiting dispatch, pounce on the lot. That at least is the theory, but it is only rarely that either police or Fascists can get a complete haul; as a rule they have to be content with some minor courier—whom not even torture can induce to squeal.

It would not be fair to the gallant anti-Fascists who are now, at infinitely greater risk to themselves than under Schuschnigg, carrying on the underground struggle against the Nazis, to write

too much of what I know about their methods, for these methods are still being employed to-day. But here is an incident which it can harm no one to repeat. One day the irrepressible young "R.S.-ler" alluded to just above met me at one of our rendezvous for general information, chortling:—

"Have you heard about that distributing depot of ours for the *Arbeiterzeitung*," he gurgled, "which is just '*hochgegangen*' [*hochgegangen*—"gone sky-high"—*Illegale* slang for "discovered by the police"] in the Neubaugasse?"

"No," I said, "and anyway I cannot see what you have to laugh at in that."

"I'll tell you," he said. "The police have been watching the place, and pounced at just the wrong moment. One comrade was '*geschnappt*' ["snapped up"—*i.e.*, arrested], but the other was able to slip out unobserved. Ten thousand copies of the '*A.Z.*' had just come in from Brünn for distribution. The comrade took a taxi to underground district headquarters, and within ten minutes bicycle scouts were out in all the streets warning over a hundred of our colporteurs who were coming along with bicycles and rucksacks to collect the junk for distribution. I heard of it, had a sudden inspiration and put an advertisement in the evening paper:

"'Well-known Fascist employer requires a number of ex-Heimwehrlen with good fighting records against the Reds as messengers immediately. Applicants should report between 7 and 10 p.m. Neubaugasse 37, with rucksacks and bicycles to collect material.'

"As you know—and as police and Heimwehr know—Party instructions to our colporteurs are, if arrested with nothing on them to say that they heard there was a job for a man with a bicycle and rucksack to go round delivering circulars, just as if they are caught with literature or letters they have to say that these, which are always handed to them sealed, were given to them by an unknown man in the streets who promised them a small sum to leave the letter or the packet at some café to be called for. Well, our good friends the secret police lay doggo, keeping their ten thousand *Arbeiterzeitung* warm, like a bunch of broody hens, and hoping for a fine hatch out of fluffy little R.S. colporteur chicklets. Soon after seven arrives the first gallant Heimwehr Red-eater in answer to our ad., throwing out his chest like a Benito or tickling his toothbrush like an Adolf, complete with the incriminating rucksack and bicycle.



*Bums!* they have him by the collar and off he goes, bewildered and protesting, to the *Kühler* ["cooler", prison cell]. Meantime I had persuaded the *Parteileitung*, despite their solemn shaking of their heads over my little joke, to post a couple of observers in the house opposite to watch the watchers, and—oh, boy!—within two days they had the joy of seeing no fewer than one hundred and seventy-three baby Starhembergs and embryo Feys trotted along to where they want to have us."

It was a Communist underground organiser who came along to me once in a very similar state of happiness to ask, "Did you see that Schuschnigg came back this morning safely from Italy?"

"Of course I did," I replied, "but what is there in that?"

"Not so much in that," he said, "but in the tender of the train which brought our gallant dictator back were just twenty thousand copies of the miniature *Rote Fahne* for distribution in Austria, packed in hollow containers painted up as lumps of coal. See the idea? If the train is held up for searching, as sometimes happens, the stoker just pitches a few extra lumps of coal into the furnace and the *corpus delicti* is destroyed."

A joke which they had not planned made the Communists laugh in Carinthia, when a workman named Pichler was caught in possession of Communist literature and arrested. When the case came on, Pichler told the court the truth—that he was really a recruiting agent for Dr. Schuschnigg's own Fascist formation, the *Ostmärkische Sturmscharen*, and had been ordered by his chiefs to get into touch with the illegal Communist movement and pretend to work in it, not as a spy (although there were masses of these as well as informers in the pay of the secret police), as the only hope of getting the workers to listen to sales talk on behalf of the *Sturmscharen*. But all the judges in Carinthia and Styria were Nazis, and although they knew quite well the truth of Pichler's story, they pretended not to accept it, and gave the gallant Clerico-Fascist a very heavy sentence as a Communist. An acquaintance of mine, a Communist underground worker from Vienna, one day had a miniature booklet slipped into his hand on the fashionable Herren-gasse in Graz. It began with three pages of quotations from Lenin and Marx. He got into the train in a state of fury at the carelessness of the Graz underground leadership in distributing material to strangers, and determined to see that the

headquarters for Austria in Vienna sent them severe reprimand. It was only when he had read past the third page that he discovered that Schuschnigg's Fatherland Front had paid the Communists the compliment of resorting to camouflaging their propaganda as Communist literature as the best way of getting the Graz workers to look at it!

Officially, the Communist underground organisations considered hoaxing unworthy of the energies of serious revolutionaries, but the "R.S.-ler" were very Viennese and felt that all plots and no play made Fritz a dull boy. They could not see why a revolutionary should not have his spot of fun at times to keep his spirits up. The authorities, however, agreed with the Communists in this matter, and meted out savage sentences to those caught spreading the hoaxes.

Revolutionaries' fun had to be paid for. Some of the anonymous authors of audacious hoaxes were among the prisoners at the great "Schutzbund Trial" of March 1936. The treatment of Socialists under the Clerico-Fascist dictatorship is sufficiently characterised by the fact that most of these prisoners, who included half a dozen women, among them the gallant—and consumptive—Frau Marie Emhart, had been locked up for eighteen months without trial and had served already commissary police sentences in advance for the same offences for which they were now put on trial. They all came into court to show a spirit as defiantly republican as though they had been arrested the day before and were not in danger of terrible sentences—two of them, Frau Emhart and the good-looking young Ernst Karl Sailer, to the capital penalty for "high treason" in having taken part in the reorganisation of the Socialist Party underground after its suppression in February 1934.

The forthcoming trial had attracted world-wide attention, and from many countries right-wing Socialists had sent delegates to fortify their comrades by their presence in court. It was one of the most fascinating of the many political trials I attended in Vienna. The focussing of foreign attention resulted in its being conducted with quite unusual fairness and in the infliction of amazingly light sentences, but there were unpleasant features enough. The court was kept three-quarters empty, only a few courageous relatives (defiantly flaunting red blouses and ties in the face of Fascist justice) being allowed in, but the Government quite untruthfully told the foreign delegates that

there were no seats free. British Socialists sent Phillips Price, M.P., an old colleague of my own in the days of the Ruhr occupation, when he represented the *Daily Herald* and I *The Times*, the Belgians Madame Vandervelde and the vast—and vastly bearded—M. de Broukère, the French M. Jean Longuet, of the Radical Socialist Party. The evidence against Sailer was admittedly that of a police spy; Sailer challenged it indignantly as false, and demanded that the spy should give evidence; Hofrat Berger, the police “anti-Red expert”, refused to produce him, and the court upheld the objection. Frau Haas, another accused, declared passionately that the documentary evidence produced against her had been “planted” in her flat by the anonymous informer who denounced her. Frau Emhart forced Berger to admit how he had put her through the Third Degree, awakening her night after night in her cell for long questioning. Many other prisoners flatly accused Berger and other commissars of falsifying their depositions; he replied lamely that he really could not remember exactly what they had said. The sentences were the lightest ever pronounced in the whole history of the persecution of Austrian Socialism, although the charges were perhaps the gravest, save for the capital charges heard in February 1934. Fourteen were acquitted, and the heaviest sentences, those imposed on Sailer and Emhart, were of twenty and eighteen months respectively. (The police, of course, stepped in and carried off a number, even of those acquitted, to Wöllersdorf.)

Next morning a little slip of paper, a carbon copy—in illegal work you always burn your original and carbon paper and use the copy, which it is harder for the police to identify as coming from any particular typewriter—was in my letter-box. It asked me to accept for myself, and pass on to “the great majority of your colleagues of the Anglo-Saxon Press”, the sincere appreciation of the families of the thirty men and women for the unbiassed reporting of the trial, and for the long hours we had sat day after day in court to ascertain the facts, instead of taking the censored version of the trial in comfort from the evening papers. Instead of signature, it just concluded with the typed words “*Die Revolutionären Sozialisten*”. Thanks for simply doing our duty as accurate observers to the newspapers which employed and paid us were, of course, quite misplaced. But I did not let the Gestapo destroy that paper.

## CHAPTER XV

### EXIT THE PRINCE

IN THE EARLY SUMMER OF 1936 SCHUSCHNIGG DELIVERED A master-stroke which ended the long rivalry between himself and his Vice-Chancellor Starhemberg as neatly as the year before he had ended with Starhemberg's help the constant danger of Fey making his peace with the Nazis and betraying him. It was Starhemberg's view that Schuschnigg was merely his place-warmer until such time as the all-powerful Duce should decide that he had attained years of discretion and would make him Italy's "Regent" in Austria. (A current Nazi joke was "Why does Starhemberg envy Pontius Pilate? Because he also wants to be appointed by Rome to govern the Jews in a Roman colony", or, alternatively, "Why does Starhemberg envy Graziani? Because Graziani and his whites rule over the black bush-niggers, and Starhemberg wants to rule with the 'Black' [*i.e.*, Clerical] Schuschniggers over the Whites".) But while the princely hare alternately sprinted and slept, the bourgeois tortoise plodded quietly on towards the goal of unchallenged personal rule. Starhemberg had the men and the arms, if not the money, and thought that he was indispensable. His boats now burned as far as the Nazis were concerned, he played first with Legitimism, then with out-and-out secular Italian Fascism. With the Church, whose interests Schuschnigg still placed in the forefront, he had quarrelled because the Vatican refused to grant the decree of nullity of marriage which he needed in order to marry the Burgtheater actress Nora Gregor. The Holy See found it impossible to declare null and void the marriage of the Vice-Chancellor of the Catholic State of Austria; one of the compensations for his political downfall which helped to keep the *temperamentvollen* Prince quiet was the granting of this decree once he was out of public life. On May 14th, 1936, while working Vienna slept and Prince Starhemberg made merry with butterfly companions in the Kobenzl Bar high above the lights of the sleeping city, Schuschnigg struck. The Prince was summoned

from his gay friends to a totally unexpected Cabinet Council. As with Fey, hints of the coming changes had reached his ears, but despite the warning example of his old rival's abrupt end, he never believed that Schuschnigg would dare to act, and so soon.

Three weeks before, Starhemberg had shouted thinly disguised defiance to Schuschnigg at a vast assembly of Heimwehr at Horn in Lower Austria. He believed himself to enjoy the favour of Mussolini on account of his now whole-hearted defiance of the Nazis, and did not realise all the implications of Mussolini's Abyssinian imbroglio. Had he seen so far, he would have understood that the Duce and the Führer might have been as thick as thieves, but were certainly no thicker; Germany's support of the theft of Abyssinia had to be paid for, and the price was a loosening of the resistance to Germany in Austria. The more Starhemberg shouted "No compromise" in support of Mussolini's policy of 1934, the more of a nuisance he made himself to Mussolini's policy of 1936. Schuschnigg had been to Italy more recently, and had learned, to his dismay, something of the changes which Mussolini was contemplating in the matter of Austria's independence. He can hardly have realised thus early, however, that it was the beginning of the full betrayal of this independence and of Austria's dictator to the German dictator, in order to suit the hand of the Italian dictator. Starhemberg certainly did not realise it, but he felt uncomfortable.

Before the Heimwehr at Horn he used phrases not usually applied by a Vice-Chancellor to his chief, especially in an "authoritarian" State. He said that he was "still loyal" to Schuschnigg, but that "some of his advisers" must be removed from power. Schuschnigg, he said, must use the Heimwehr against his so-called friends, otherwise one day he might be "removed" by these people. The friends he referred to were the Pronounced Nationals, such as Seyss-Inquart. (When Seyss-Inquart "removed" Schuschnigg in 1938, the Heimwehr existed no more and Starhemberg was ski-ing abroad.) Starhemberg opened his mouth very widely on April 26th. He was going to tear the masks from the faces of Schuschnigg's false friends and rid the State of the "wreckers"—by which he seems to have understood both Nazis and those who sought appeasement with the Socialists—in fact anyone who did not stand blindly behind himself. In ringing tones, amidst the deafening cheers of thousands of armed Heimwehr, he flung down the gauntlet to the Chancellor, declar-

ing, "Some people in very high places demand that the Heimwehr should be dissolved. I warn them to-day that the Heimwehr can be disarmed only over my dead body." (Six months later the Heimwehr were disarmed without the least inconvenience to Starhemberg's well-built body.)

This sounded perfectly splendid to the Heimwehr, and nobody seemed to bother much about the fact that the money for their maintenance had to come from Schuschnigg, who had refused to pay the piper any longer until he could call the tune. Starhemberg, head in air, took a new step to flatter Mussolini, and caused difficulty for Schuschnigg with the Western Powers by sending a quite gratuitous and sycophantic telegram to Mussolini congratulating him "on the glorious and wonderful victory of Italian Fascist armies over barbarism and over democratic dishonesty and hypocrisy". Since British and French democratic Governments at this moment were half-heartedly enforcing the shadow-sanctions against Italian Fascist barbarism, this telegram of the hot-headed Austrian Vice-Chancellor resulted in British and French diplomatic protests to Schuschnigg. Something like a free-for-all showed signs of developing among the Austrian Fascist leaders. Schuschnigg's moderate Clerical supporters in the *Freiheitsbund* (which, it may now be admitted, included a great many carefully camouflaged Revolutionary Socialists and Communists among its sub-leaders) were marched through Vienna as a counter-demonstration to that of the Heimwehr at Horn. The Heimwehr started street rioting against them, and the ever-hopeful Fey emerged from the backwoods of the Danube and its Steamship Company on to a balcony on the Ringstrasse to encourage Heimwehr shouts of "String up Schuschnigg—give us Fey as Dictator". Fey had to be removed by detectives, and some sixty Heimwehr-men, including leaders, were arrested on Schuschnigg's orders. Starhemberg drove to the police station and insisted on their immediate release. But Fey had stolen his dictatorial thunder, and Heimwehr Tweedledum disowned Heimwehr Tweedledee in a Heimwehr communiqué stating that the Heimwehr could take no responsibility for any actions of "the former Minister Fey". In reply came an official bulletin of—the Danube Steamship Company! This purely commercial undertaking ventured into politics for the first and last time with a statement that its President, "ex-Vice-Chancellor and Knight of the Order of Maria Theresia, Major Emil Fey",

just happened to be paying a private visit on the Ringstrasse when he was recognised and cheered by "the public".

In the midst of all this nonsense Schuschnigg, cool and efficient, struck home. When Starhemberg arrived at the Ballhausplatz from the Kobenzl Bar, he was told that his services were no longer required and that his Heimwehr were going to be disarmed or incorporated into a new single Fascist body over which Schuschnigg would have sole control. Nobody was unkind enough to remind him of that promise about his dead body, and the Prince himself was in far too convivial a mood to recall it. Hardly any of the military precautions regarded as essential to ensure that Fey went quietly were considered necessary in getting rid of Starhemberg. He lost at the same time the command of the Fatherland Front; his friend Berger-Waldenegg, then Foreign Minister, went with him, Schuschnigg eagerly seizing on the excuse of Starhemberg's "Abyssinia" telegram to demand Berger's resignation. For once a modicum of truth got into an Austrian official communiqué, which admitted that Starhemberg had resigned "on account of differences of opinion" with the Chancellor. Now Schuschnigg was supreme—and completely isolated, with a clamorous following of greedy little men. He was Chancellor, leader of the Fatherland Front, supreme head of the new militia which was to be formed from "dependable elements" of the Heimwehr, Foreign Minister, and much more, as his Law of the Fatherland Front promptly established. The Fatherland Front was decreed the sole political movement which could be tolerated in Austria, and Schuschnigg the person entitled to nominate and dismiss its leaders at will. Non-members of his Front were excluded from every public function or employment. An order disbanding the Heimwehr was at once issued.

The next night I saw Starhemberg off for Italy—with the Austrian football team, in his capacity of "Austrian Sports Führer". He stood in the door of his sleeper looking dazed and as though he had not yet realised the swift changes since his jolly party on the Kobenzl had been broken up so abruptly the night before. In the corridor, retiringly, stood the beautiful Nora Gregor; on the platform sheepish supporters, surrounded by armed police, shouting:

"Heil Ernst Rüdiger—Heil Fascism!"

"The fight for Fascism in Austria is just beginning", the



Prince told me, in an outburst of wishful thinking, a shade mechanically. He was right—but it was the fight for the triumph of international Fascism, the axis Rome–Berlin, and he was just a little pawn to be sacrificed to larger issues. On returning from Italy he put a bold face on matters, told his friends that Schuschnigg was a broken man after the tragic death of his wife in July 1935, and that Mussolini had told him that he and his Heimwehr were Fascist Italy's watch-dogs in Austria to see that Schuschnigg did not go too far with Germany. Clearly Mussolini had led him right down some lovely Italian garden-path.

It was not until November that Schuschnigg was ready for his next coup. Once again Starhemberg was caught with his mouth very wide open—and nothing in his hands. When Starhemberg was dropped from the Cabinet in May, the Heimwehr showed signs of fighting to retain the many comfortable little jobs they had secured at the expense of the population at large. But meantime, "summer was ycomen in", the Adriatic was pleasantly warm, and Starhemberg found the Lido—and Nora Gregor—much more interesting than politics. The bout of enthusiasm was over. The Austrian papers carefully suppressed the fact that on his dismissal by Schuschnigg, Starhemberg had seized the opportunity of exclusion from public life to demand again—this time in agreement with Princess Starhemberg—the dissolution of his marriage. Now he was successful. The Heimwehr had served their turn by destroying the power of the workers of Austria, and, as usual with the dupes of Fascism, were quietly dropped by their principal unofficial financiers, Mussolini and Fritz Mandl.

Fey, doubly discredited but never without hope, tried to get back at Starhemberg's expense. He started a series of Heimwehr meetings where he denounced Starhemberg's indolence, told Schuschnigg that he was ready to re-organise the Heimwehr on Schuschnigg's own lines, and incidentally stood vermouth and sandwiches to me and a number of colleagues to persuade us that this was all true. Starhemberg countered by a meeting of Heimwehr leaders offering "conditional support" to Schuschnigg concluding his speech with the remark "*Auf Wiedersehen in Wöllersdorf Concentration Camp*". Schuschnigg adroitly encouraged the split.

On the night of October 10th, Schuschnigg was scheduled to leave by train for Budapest to attend the funeral of the Hungarian

semi-dictator, General Goemboes. The Heimwehr leaders felt safe to pursue their internal feuds. Then Schuschnigg made his most dramatic coup—as usual with public buildings garrisoned by machine-gun-armed police—through an emergency Cabinet Council. After a stormy all-night meeting he expelled the last Heimwehr influence from the Cabinet, drafted and passed a decree forbidding Ministers to owe any allegiance except to himself, got the worthy President Miklas out of bed to take the necessary new oaths from Ministers and without having gone to bed at all left at dawn for Budapest.

He was not merciless to a fallen foe. He conferred on the gallant Starhemberg the post of “President of the Mothers’ Aid Section of the Fatherland Front”.

## CHAPTER XVI

### DEATH-WARRANT

ONE HOT SATURDAY AFTERNOON IN JULY THERE WAS AN unrecorded revolution in Austria. I was the rebel, and I revolted against the exhausting business of trying to track down the truth about the complicated secret negotiations between Schuschnigg, the Austrian "Pronounced Nationals" (camouflaged Nazis), the German Nazis and Hitler himself, as well as the equivocal rôle played by Mussolini. On Friday evening there had been a diplomatic reception given by that always well-informed diplomat, the United States Minister, George R. Messersmith. I found that he agreed with me that Schuschnigg was on the verge of a very dangerous step, which I characterised as "a fatal surrender to Germany". The key to all the mysteries lay in the hands of von Papen, who at the moment was tying himself into double knots with intrigues and double crosses. He had been constantly calling on Schuschnigg, and all reference to the interviews had been kept out of the Press. I knew that Schuschnigg had made what he called "a final offer" to Hitler, and that Hitler had rejected it. There was a deadlock in the negotiations. Schuschnigg had countered by encouraging Habsburg propaganda to an unusual extent and allowing reports of a pending restoration to get abroad. The question on everybody's lips at Messersmith's party was "What is Papen doing?"

Under the trees of the garden of the American Legation I spotted a certain titled Austrian whom I knew well, who stood very high up in the Nazi hierarchy and knew all the secrets of the movement. I interrupted his enjoyment of one of Messersmith's famous rum cocktails to pump him.

"It seems to be going badly for us at the moment", he said, "but of course, we shall get what we want in the end. I could not see Papen to-day, but apparently there will be no news till Monday, as he has gone to Berchtesgaden for the week-end, to talk over Schuschnigg's obstinacy with Hitler". It was then, foreseeing a perfect flood of work the following week when Papen

should return to force Schuschnigg's surrender, that I determined to revolt and take a Saturday evening off.

While making a long cast across the weir at Kirchberg on the Pielach as the evening rise was almost due, I saw a peasant gesticulating at me from the opposite bank. Peasants often gesticulate at fly-fishers in Austria, usually with no friendly motive. I continued casting and he gesticulating. Presently one of several small boys bathing in the weir pool swam out to where I was wading in mid-stream and said, "That man over there says you are wanted on the telephone from Vienna at the inn". It was my colleague. "Papen travelled half the night to Berchtesgaden and the other half back again to Vienna", he said. "Hitler and Schuschnigg have concluded an agreement." Within two hours I was back in Vienna to cover the story of how Schuschnigg had signed Austria's death-warrant.

\* \* \* \* \*

Such satisfaction as was expressed in England over Herr Hitler's triumph on obtaining Dr. Schuschnigg's agreement to the pact which the former obviously so desperately needed and the latter signed with real distrust must have been largely based on faith in the late Dr. Coué. Herr Hitler's successive triumphs, starting with his Chancellorship, have always been hailed by the professional optimists of Britain with the assurance that, unlikely as it might seem at the moment, they were certain that every day in every way he was going to behave better and better. Why? What reason was there for believing that Herr Hitler had abandoned his most cherished dream—the ultimate conquest of his native Austria? Certainly the other party to this pact, a gentleman's agreement between two gentlemen, one of whom was not at all sure that the other was, did not believe it. Those who know him—and I have friends who know him as intimately as it is possible to know this isolated figure—agree that while Hitler will discuss temperately and bargain about this and that, he has never tolerated discussion of the three matters concerning which he has had Revelations from the Teutonic God—Austria, Soviet Russia, and the Jews. About these he KNOWS. Wotan told him. Those who knew Hitler were as ready to believe when he signed the Austro-German Agreement that he would revoke all his *ex cathedra* pronouncements about the Jews and the Soviets as that he would renounce his dearest aim of full triumph in Austria.

Did you notice a row of asterisks just now? From there on I have been quoting from an article which the *New Statesman* published in July 1936. Another periodical, caught up in the wave of silly optimism with which this disastrous Austro-German agreement was greeted in England by those who thought that Nazi promises were really worth the paper on which they were written, had refused it on the grounds that it was written from "too Left a standpoint". It is but a melancholy pleasure, as a rule, to be able to say "I told you so". In my case, in face of the unspeakable tragedy of Austria, it is no pleasure at all—but let me say it once more in another quotation from the same article :

"Was it for such results and for the prospect of seeing a great chain of united Fascist dictatorships—Germany, Poland, Austria, Hungary and perhaps Bulgaria facilitating the *Drang nach Osten*—and the *Drang nach* Britain's communications with India—that Britain supported the Dollfuss regime in overthrowing the democratic republic of Austria, handed over to the Duce the job of 'protecting' Austria from Hitler and even swallowed the relentless crushing of the Socialists and their great achievements in Vienna, always on the plea that anything was better than German control of Austria? But no doubt it will be contended that the new Austro-German agreement has prevented this. Those who think so, will find Austria worth watching."

My God, they did !

In another article written in July 1936 I said :

"Taking the longer view, the Austro-German Agreement is one more step towards the launching of war by the Fascist States against the democratic or Socialist countries, whose very existence is a reproach and a nightmare to the Fascist dictators."

Now another quotation—this time from the July issue of the Nazi illegal paper *Oesterreichische Beobachter* which I find among the treasures of my "Personal File" :

"National Socialists ! German *Volksgenossen* !

"An unexpected event which must be taken seriously became known to the world yesterday. Keep cool blood, examine matters quietly and decide on the facts. Adolf Hitler has concluded an agreement with the present Austrian Government. That is definite.

"Adolf Hitler wants only the best for the German people, he knows what is necessary and will always do the right thing. That also is definite. We Austrian National Socialists feel in our very blood that Adolf Hitler will never drop us and will never forget us. Anyone who doubts this does not belong in our

ranks. The laying down of the principle of non-intervention in Austria's internal affairs and recognition of Austria's full sovereignty dates from May 21st, 1935; it was only the Austrian Government which did not believe this and represented all the actions of the Austrian Nazis as inspired and financed by Germany. What Adolf Hitler has agreed to in this Pact is nothing new for us and can only help us. We have our organisation and our aim, securing power in the State. We shall throw our whole strength into continuing the fight. Let no one confuse you, trust the leadership and your orders and maintain iron discipline. Then after this first step will come a second, later others and finally the victorious end, when we have secured A NATIONAL SOCIALIST AUSTRIA."

My reference to the Austro-German Pact as a gentleman's agreement of a peculiar type is more accurate if amended a little. It was really a gentleman's agreement involving three gentlemen, each of whom was convinced that neither of the other was, and therefore did not see why he should behave like one either. Primarily it was an Italo-German Agreement about Austria, in which the latter was forced to concur. In the Spring of 1936 the two great Fascist States, Germany and Italy, had decided, despite their mutual distrust and conflict of national aims, that on the balance both could gain through co-operation against the Western democracies and Russia. Hitler's preliminary condition was that Mussolini should force Schuschnigg to come to terms with him. Early in May von Papen had started his secret negotiations, playing on Dr. Schuschnigg's weakest point as a statesman—his sincere Catholicism—urging that if he made peace with Hitler he would serve the cause of the Vatican and save the Catholics in Germany. It was a fantastic argument, but Schuschnigg was very devout and von Papen a Papal Chamberlain who cunningly contrived to serve for a while two masters—his Church and Hitler. Schuschnigg had gone to Rome at the end of April to seek a renewal from Mussolini of his guarantees against German aggression. With a shock he learned that Mussolini had promised to make an Austro-German settlement part of an eventual Italo-German co-operation, in itself a step towards the dream of a great reactionary Fascist bloc to include Germany, Poland, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Italy, Albania and eventually Yugoslavia. Czechoslovakia was to be isolated, surrounded and terrorised into abandoning her defensive alliances with France and Russia, her feeble reactionary Czech minority strengthened and encouraged to co-operate with Henlein to overthrow the Republic and bring the new State also into the German-dominated reactionary bloc.

Starhemberg had lost his first optimism concerning Mussolini's backing. He had tried to overthrow Schuschnigg during his absence by summoning a Cabinet Council (as Vice-Chancellor) and hastily giving to the world the story of the Austrian Phoenix Insurance Company scandal. Schuschnigg had stopped this game on his return, thanks to one of the employees of the Phoenix putting into his hands lists of those bribed by the Company, which compromised Starhemberg's Heimwehr friends even more deeply than Schuschnigg's. In Italy the Duce threw out Signor Suvich—again on the demand of Hitler, who knew that, although a Fascist, he was a strong anti-Nazi. The alternate bullying and cajoling of the unfortunate Schuschnigg by the adroit and tireless von Papen continued throughout May and June. The main point on which he held out was the refusal to grant a plebiscite on the question of the Anschluss, which was a cardinal point for the Nazis, since they had made all plans for carrying it through with the whole weight of Germany's millions and Germany's money behind them, as they did eventually in 1938. Hitler himself was scared of a re-formation of the Locarno front at the forthcoming meeting of the Locarno Powers. In a desperate hurry to stop this by reaching full agreement with Italy, he dropped the plebiscite demand. It was this that sent von Papen travelling back through the night to Vienna with the signed agreement in his pocket, to spoil my fishing on the Pielach. Germany promptly gave a lead to the world in recognising the Italian rape of Abyssinia, and Italy left the Stresa front.

And what was the British Government doing about all this? Let nobody libel the National Government by saying that it did nothing. Mr. Eden presented his famous questionnaire to Germany, asking the most embarrassing questions about her intentions towards Austria. The questionnaire lay on Herr Hitler's table—and went on lying on it. Unless his charwoman has cleared it away together with the Austro-German Agreement and other scraps of paper in which the Nazis take no further interest, it is no doubt lying there to this day. For the Nazi Government, always to be relied on to add insolence to outrage, had the audacity to inform Great Britain after the wretched Schuschnigg had been bullied into signing Austria's death-warrant on July 11th, that it did not propose to take any further notice of the questionnaire in view of German's "pacific gesture" towards Austria. And the National Government of Great Britain, like the perfect little gentleman it can always be



relied on to be towards Fascist Powers, asked no further troublesome questions. My Nazi friend whom I had talked to in the garden of the American Legation went soon after to Berlin to see Hitler and ask what the Austrian Nazis were to do. The Führer told him:

“ At the moment, nothing violent—just keep up their spirits, hold the party together and continue propaganda. I have now much bigger things than Austria on hand and another terror wave, or worse still, a Putsch, just now, would make things difficult for me in Europe—very difficult indeed. Tell my followers in Austria to stand firm and lie low—before long Austria is going to drop into my lap like a ripe plum.” Yet in Great Britain there was such official optimism expressed that even in possession of the real facts, one was almost inclined to doubt the evidence of one's own eyes. The same British optimists insisted that if only Czechoslovakia could be jockeyed into making enough concessions to Germany to damage her own powers of resistance, she would drop into Hitler's lap like a ripe plum and war be avoided. No doubt now that this has happened and the Skoda Works are turning out guns for Germany instead of against her, the same argument will be applied to force Rumania to surrender her oil and granaries for the German war machine. Germany, they hope, will be blind enough to attack lean Russia—who has shown no fear of her—instead of plump Britain with her “surrender Government”.

The Austro-German Agreement was stated to “recognise the mutual interests of the two Germanic States, Germany and Austria, and to put on record Germany's recognition of the sovereignty of Austria and her pledge that she would not interfere in Austrian internal affairs.” At the same time, Schuschnigg had to admit two thinly camouflaged Nazis to the Cabinet. One was Dr. Guido Schmidt, Foreign Secretary, who with Herr von Papen betrayed Schuschnigg in February 1938 into the final disaster of the visit to Hitler in Berchtesgaden. The other was Glaise von Horstenau, who on March 11th, 1938, landed in Vienna from Berlin, to bring to the Chancellor of the country to which he had taken an oath of loyalty an ultimatum from the Chancellor of Germany, coupled with the intimation of the forthcoming invasion. (In Chapter XXIII you will find Glaise-Horstenau's own boasting of his treachery.) To-day there can be hardly one of the optimists of July 1936 who would dispute that the Pact then concluded was indeed Austria's death-warrant.

## CHAPTER XVII

### SECRET HISTORY

THE TERMS OF THE PACT WERE SO APPALLING FOR THOSE WHO were fighting for Austria's independence and could appreciate their inner significance that they were never published, although in course of time, as Schuschnigg made one concession after another, the patriotic public began to guess that he must have been forced into them by the Pact. I have before me as I write, copies of the whole Agreement, public and secret. The formal Treaty is very brief, consisting only of three clauses, which were made public. Had there been a prospect of their observance it might have been said that Schuschnigg had got quite a good deal in return for his surrender, but Nazi Germany has never made any secret of the fact that any treaty which she signs binds her just as long as it suits her policy and no longer. In the light of the known facts about the rape of Austria by Germany in March 1938 its terms are interesting. The three clauses provide firstly that the Reich Government recognises the full sovereignty of the Federal State of Austria "in the sense of the Führer and Reichskanzler's statements of May 21st, 1935". (These statements ran: "Germany has neither the intention nor the desire to interfere in internal Austrian affairs or to carry through an annexation or Anschluss of Austria. But I believe that no regime which is not anchored in, supported and desired by the people can last.") Secondly, internal political matters, "including the question of Austrian National Socialism", are regarded by each State as purely the private affair of the other, which it will not seek to influence directly or indirectly. Thirdly, Austria promises to conduct its general policy, especially *vis-à-vis* Germany, in accordance with the fact that Austria recognises herself to be a German State. This final clause amounted to an acceptance of Germany's suzerainty in foreign affairs, although the continuance of a parallel vassalage to Italy in accordance with the Rome Protocols—the Three-Power Pact between Italy, Austria and Hungary, signed at Rome

on March 18th, 1934—and their supplementary Protocols signed in 1936 was provided for as an exception.

The secret part of the Treaty, which I have also in my hands, is headed "Gentlemen [*sic*] Agreement", and is characterised in the text as confidential. Clause 1 provides—the provisions of course apply to each country, but I write only of their significant side—that Nazi organisations shall be started on Austrian soil for German subjects "provided they do not try to influence by propaganda" Austrian subjects. One can almost see the German Nazi negotiators winking as they accepted this safeguard. Certainly they must have grinned as Schuschnigg accepted Clause 2, which records that "recalling that both States belong to the German cultural circle", they mutually agree to abstain from allowing any aggressive tendencies against the other in broadcasting, film, news or theatrical matters. Restrictions on books were to be gradually removed. That meant on the one hand the reappearance of "Mein Kampf", the Nazis' bible in all countries, with its insane incitements against the Jews and its attacks on Austrian independence, and on the other—as the Nazis interpreted it—suppression in Austria of books criticising the regime in Germany. Section 3 is headed simply "Press". Each country obliges itself "to influence" its Press—including that of the *émigrés*—so that it shall not interfere in the internal affairs, and shall restrict its criticism, of the other. Excellent again, of course, had there been any hope of German loyalty. The one-sided nature of the agreement is characterised by the lists, each of five papers, which each country agrees to admit from the other. Austria accepts five of the most important German Nazi "national newspapers"—the *Berliner Börsenzeitung*, *Berliner Tagblatt*, *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten* and *Essener Nationalzeitung*. The latter, the organ of General Goering, almost immediately became so entirely a propaganda organ for the Austrian Nazis that many of them dropped subscriptions to their own illegal organ, since it could hardly have been more aggressive than Goering's newspaper which Schuschnigg had bound himself to accept. Repeated confiscations of individual issues—usually after a quantity had already been sold—did little to check the disruptive influence of this paper.

Germany did not accept a single widely-read patriotic Austrian newspaper. On the list she agreed to stood the terribly dull and

ponderous official gazette of Austria, the *Wiener Zeitung*, the boulevard gossip paper of Viennese society women, the *Neues Wiener Journal*, the obscure little sheet read chiefly on account of its cheapness by good Catholic peasant women in the backwoods, the *Volkszeitung*, and the two principal provincial, thinly camouflaged Nazi organs, the *Grazer Tagespost* and the *Linzer Tagespost*. Section 4 had been sufficiently vaguely worded to enable Schuschnigg to refuse to take the suicidal course which it was intended to force on him of sanctioning the return of the Austrian Legion of Nazi gunmen and bomb-throwers; it ties the Austrian Government only to "examine the question" of their return. The fifth section sanctions the use of the Swastika badge and banner and the singing of the Horst Wessel song by German subjects in Austria, which, of course, opened the way for abuses which the Germans did not hesitate to take. The sixth paragraph contains harmless economic provisions, provides for the mutual abolition of restriction on tourist visits—on the German side, for the removal of the "Thousand-Mark-Barrier", which, by inflicting economic ruin on hotel-keepers and others in the frontier districts largely dependent on German tourists, had done so much to bring recruits to the Austrian Nazis. Germany abolished the "Thousand-Mark-Barrier"—and maintained its effect by refusing the necessary exit visas for tourists to Austria as well as financial facilities for them. Paragraph 8 repeats the subjugation of Austrian to German foreign policy contained in the last paragraph of the formal Treaty. As the German net closed around Schuschnigg this clause was used to prevent him from finding an outlet in close co-operation or alliance with Czechoslovakia and other Danubian States. More than anything else, except for the ensuing paragraph 9 (b), this became Austria's death-warrant.

Paragraph 9, section (a), ties the Chancellor to grant an amnesty (to include prisoners not yet tried) to all Nazis except those guilty of very grave crimes; a pencil note on this "Gentlemen's Agreement" extends this to members of the Austrian Legion, if allowed to return. Section (b) is suicide. "With the object of encouraging a real appeasement, the Austrian Chancellor declares that he is prepared at a suitable moment which he intends shall come in the near future to summon leaders of the so-called 'National Opposition in Austria' [the Nazi camouflage phrase at the moment] to co-operate in taking political responsibility.

The persons concerned shall be such as enjoy the confidence of the Austrian Chancellor, whom he is to select himself." The three men to whom Schuschnigg gave his confidence and who entered his Cabinet within the Nazi Trojan Horse were the three who finally plotted his destruction—at first Dr. Guido Schmidt with General Glaise von Horstenau and finally Dr. Seyss-Inquart. "It is hereby agreed", the clause continued, "that these persons shall be given the task of providing—in accordance with a plan to be drawn up in advance—for the internal satisfaction of the wishes of the National Opposition and their co-operation in forming political opinion in Austria". And that, of course, meant nothing more nor less than that, once safely within the beleaguered Government of independent Austria, the occupants of the Trojan Horse were to emerge and open the gates to the entire hostile army.

Here is another secret document on my table which grew out of the last quoted seven months later. Dated February 12th, 1937, it is called "Extract from an Aide Memoire of the Ministers Glaise-Horstenau and Neustädter-Stürmer". Paragraph 1 deals with the proposed "Deutsch-Sozialer Volksbund in Austria", a new Nazi camouflage body formed in accordance with paragraph 9 of the "Gentlemen's Agreement". It contains the names as committee members of more people to whom the misguided Chancellor gave his confidence. The first one is Dr. Jury, a medical man, who in March 1938 led the attack, as Seyss-Inquart's deputy and one of Dr. Schuschnigg's Council of State, on Dr. Schuschnigg's plebiscite. One of those concerned with Leopold in the Tavs plot, he is to-day among the most rabid persecutors in high places of Schuschnigg's former friends in Austria. There is Herr In-der-Maur, a vitriolic Nazi journalist, who had subsequently to be arrested for high treason. And then there is Tavs himself—Tavs of the infamous "Tavs Plan", actually drawn up by Rudolf Hess, the deputy of the Führer, but found in the possession of Tavs when the police in January 1938 raided Nazi headquarters in the Teinfaltstrasse. The plan contained the details of the very scheme for Austria's destruction by Nazi disorders at home and German invasion which Herr Hitler put into operation the following March.

How far Schuschnigg had slipped—inevitably, of course, after the fatal pact of July 11th, 1936—is shown in all the other paragraphs of the "Aide Memoire". The second provides

that Nazi personalities are to be appointed to every public corporation, including the "Councils of State", with again the proviso—meaningless, as events proved—that they should enjoy Schuschnigg's confidence. The third paragraph opens the door for the entry of the Nazis under the title of *Volkspolitische Referenten* to high posts in the organisation formed expressly to protect Austria from their machinations, the Fatherland Front. It was as head of the *Volkspolitische Referenten* that Seyss-Inquart was able to pull the strings in the provinces from February 12th till March 11th, 1938, and so bring about the final disruption of the Front. The fourth paragraph provides for a "reform" of the laws and regulations for protection against Nazi aggression and conspiracy, and for the restoration of cancelled pensions to the majority of the disloyal State officials; further, for allowances to be paid out of State funds to those who had suffered for the part they had taken in Nazi conspiracies if they were not entitled to State pensions. Except in cases of the worst crimes, dismissed Nazis were to be reinstated.

What did Schuschnigg get in return for this confirmation of Austria's political death-warrant? Another scrap of paper—a very little one this time—a copy of which is also before me. Like the others, of course, it has up till now been kept secret. Dated February 13th, 1937, it is headed "Declaration".

"I declare that for reasons of *Realpolitik* we take note of the independence of Austria and accept this as a basis. This declaration applies to the Constitution of 1934 and to the Law of the Fatherland Front. We declare that we do not seek to form a Party apart from the Fatherland Front." The declaration is signed by Dr. Hugo Jury as "President of the Committee of Seven" and Deputy of the "Leader of the National Opposition", Captain Joseph Leopold, and "with the knowledge and consent of the National Opposition". A note on the Declaration records that it was handed to the Chancellor immediately before his reception of Captain Leopold. Captain Leopold had already been appointed by the Chancellor of Germany as head of the illegal Nazi movement in Austria! A further note records that with this declaration the National Opposition agrees to base its activities on the Austro-German Agreement of July 11th, 1936, and to enjoy the rights which this treaty conferred on them. The ensuing twelve months were to show how this was to be interpreted.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### SLIPPING DOWNHILL

THE AUSTRIAN CHANCELLOR HAD NOT LONG TO WAIT FOR THE first fruits of the July 11th Agreement. The night before the second anniversary of the murder of Dollfuss, Schuschnigg, trying as usual to make good by personal courage what he had lost by lack of judgment, broadcast a tribute to his predecessor, declaring that as Dollfuss, "treacherously murdered, lay on the ground, fighting for his last breath, he had refused the demand of his murderers to abandon the principles for which he had lived and died". Austria would not deviate in the least from the path which Dr. Dollfuss had followed. The next day, July 25th, was the national day of mourning for Dollfuss. It was celebrated by the thousands of Nazis released on this day by a triumphal procession and banquets. Incidentally, two delegates of the British Labour Party, C. G. Ammon and S. S. Silverman, came to Austria at this time to ask for the extension of the amnesty to the Socialists. Dr. Schuschnigg refused to receive them, although he was all the time negotiating with the leaders of his deadliest enemies, the Nazis. Guido Schmidt saw them, and said that the Chancellor was about to abolish the system of multiple sentences for one offence under which Socialists had suffered so severely. After the two M.P.s' departure the system remained unchanged.

On July 29th, the occasion of the arrival of the Olympic Torch in Vienna was seized upon by the Nazis to celebrate Schuschnigg's defeat eighteen days before. The Nazis had tipped me off as to what was going to happen. Long before the Torch arrived, the Heldenplatz, the great open space in front of the semi-circular sweep of the Hofburg, and the adjacent parts of the Ringstrasse were packed with thousands of people. It was not difficult to distinguish among them the little groups of illegal storm-troopers, many of them openly wearing the forbidden but agreed emblem of white stockings. Soon began the rhythmic chanting with which the Nazi witch-doctors work up the fanatical



masses to a blind and uncontrollable frenzy. This ceremonial chanting which I have observed so often in Germany, Austria and the Sudeten areas of Czechoslovakia, might have been taken straight from the ritual of savage tribes. The monotonous chorused repetition destroys all reasoning and thinking power as the lungs usurp the functions of the brain.

"Sieg Heil!" it began hesitantly, but gathering momentum with every second that it was realised that the police would remain inactive, "Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! *Sieg Heil!* SIEG HEIL! SIEG HEIL! SIEG HEIL!" Still the police did nothing, and, gathering courage, the frenzied boys went on to hail the name of the man whose hands were itching to destroy the independence of their country—"Heil Hitler! *Heil Hitler!* HEIL HITLER!" As the Olympic Torch drew near, there came from the loud-speakers the notes of the Austrian National Anthem. The Nazis, of course, sang *Deutschland über Alles*, and then, with increasing boldness, the strictly forbidden Horst Wessel song. Starhemberg, as Chief Sports Leader, tried to address a speech of welcome to the Torch-Bearer, but not even his stentorian lungs could prevail against the Nazis, who, now that dusk had turned to darkness, found no limits to their courage. Infuriated, Starhemberg finally issued peremptory orders to the reluctant police, and with infinite gentleness they began to urge the storm-troop detachments to move. All the latter did was to circulate through the remainder of the crowds, shouting and singing with their hands now upraised in the forbidden Hitler salute and howling like a dozen wolf-packs, "*Pfui Starhemberg*"—"Shame on Starhemberg". This, the biggest demonstration yet seen against the Austrian Government, ended with about a hundred arrests, thanks only to the insistence of the infuriated Starhemberg. The heaviest sentences were imposed, not on the Nazis, but on a number of Communists and Revolutionary Socialists who had distributed leaflets warning the crowds of the anticipated Nazi disturbances and urging them to make counter-demonstrations for the independence of Austria. The following day a huge but quite mechanical demonstration of the Fatherland Front held on Schuschnigg's orders in the Inner City fell very flat. I saw a couple of Nazi boys who threw stink-bombs quite effectively beaten up. The operation of the amnesty was suspended; few Nazis suffered under this, for most had already been released. The real victims were the Left

prisoners, who had just been promised that the amnesty should be extended to them, but had not yet been released. Now their sentences, although it was not they but their worst enemies who had organised the disorders, continued to run. Once again it was the real defenders of Austria's independence who suffered at the hands of the self-proclaimed champion of that cause.

Starhemberg, of course, was caught out as usual—amusing himself in Italy at the time when Schuschnigg signed the Pact, to prepare the way for which he had been dropped from the Cabinet on Mussolini's instructions. He came posting back when it was all over, and did precisely nothing about it. His only other appearance in the political limelight was when, just prior to Schuschnigg finally disposing of him and his Heimwehr in October,\* he solemnly expelled Major Fey and his friend Major Lahr from the Heimwehr because the irrepressible Fey was seeing Schuschnigg and standing aperitifs to foreign correspondents in anticipation of becoming commander of the Fatherland Front Militia that Schuschnigg was about to create on the Italian Fascist model. Fey, master of pompous communiqués, countered with one of his best, announcing that he withdrew the Vienna Heimwehr from Starhemberg and made it an independent body on account of Starhemberg's "indolence, pleasure-seeking and general incapacity". Starhemberg replied with insinuations concerning Fey's rôle on the day of Dollfuss' murder. Out of this grew a challenge to a duel which never came off between the two Heimwehr leaders, and an investigation by the Chapter of the Knights of Maria Theresia into Starhemberg's undefined insinuations of treachery or cowardice during the Nazi Putsch in July 1934. The enquiry whitewashed the Major. It would be pleasant to be able to adapt the old proverb and record that when these dictators fell out, honest democrats came to their own. Unfortunately these two dictators had already ceased to count, the Hitler dictatorship peril was steadily increasing and Dictator Schuschnigg was still very much in the saddle. Actually times became much harder for the underground Left opposition, for the Austro-German Pact now set the police very largely free to follow the dictates of their own hearts and turn their full force on to persecution of the illegal Socialist and Communist movements. In this they had

\* See Chapter XIII.

now the aid of many Nazis who, living underground as they had done like the Left, although in entirely separate burrows, had nevertheless come inevitably to learn some of the secrets of the Left section of the warren. Again and again did important members of the Leftist Central Committees now fall victims of police espionage and raids. But always someone was ready to fill the gap, and the fight went on.

On October 14th, after the final eclipse of Starhemberg and the incorporation of the Heimwehr in his militia, Schuschnigg massed 350,000 more or less willing members of his Fatherland Front on the Schmelz parade-ground. As I walked up the hill to watch the spectacle I trod on thousands of little red slips bearing the three arrows of the Revolutionary Socialists and slogans such as "Hold out against Schuschnigg's and Hitler's Fascism—the R.S. are still there", and "Vienna remains Red at heart, whatever the outside colour". I noticed many of those compelled to march out wearing the badge of the Fatherland Front grinning happily at this little indication that "our Illegals," as they called them, were still at work. The parade confirmed for me all that I had written from time to time about the hopelessness of Schuschnigg trying to fight Nazism with this unreal business of the Fatherland Front. There was a brightly glowing faith among the Communists. Among the Socialists there was a steady certainty of final victory—if not for themselves, then for their children—based on the sheer logic of where the interests of the great majority of the population lay, on a deep sense of rightness amidst a wrong-headed world. The Nazis fought with the assurance given by the backing of Hitler and the resources of his 66,000,000 Reich, with the courage of those who know that many of their judges will be on their side, and the faith that they would in the end richly recoup themselves for financial losses by the eventual plundering of the Jews and the patriotic Austrians. The Fatherland Front marched mechanically, almost sullenly. To a large extent the marchers were made up of municipal employees, still Socialist at heart as they had always been, and to a lesser extent of Heimwehr and of Nazis in State employment. Schuschnigg's denunciations of socialism and democracy were for the most part received in stony silence; only his profession of faith in the necessity of Austrian independence was cheered to the echo. For the hundredth time I felt the poignant tragedy of this man, blinded

by his Catholic hatred of "Reds", leaving unutilised this passionate desire of the masses to keep Austria free of the Brown horror from Germany, and wasting all his talents on trying to infuse life into this meaningless Fatherland Front. The presence of 3000 uniformed police, 600 secret police and the arrests of hundreds of known Socialists in advance did not suffice to prevent the underground "Reds" from distributing 2,500,000 leaflets on the Schmelz that day—many of them from gay little balloons which floated up from nowhere, drifted awhile overhead and then burst, scattering showers of little red slips over our heads.

After the destruction of the Socialists, Dollfuss had appointed a certain non-Fascist—Ernst Karl Winter—as one of the three Vice-Burgomasters of Vienna to be a bait for the workers. Winter was a curious character, a religious, non-Marxist Socialist, a Monarchist, a liberal and a man who meant really well by the workers. He did no good, of course, and now, in October 1936, he was dismissed for advocating to Schuschnigg the obvious remedy for his dilemma—the formation of a Popular Front to fight the Nazis. Winter had no more real political judgment than Schuschnigg. He was obsessed by the idea that the Socialist workers could be induced to support a restoration, and made several journeys to London, Paris and elsewhere seeking to persuade Liberals and Socialists abroad of this.

The complete failure of the July agreement to secure any modification of the Nazi conspiracies in Austria began to worry Schuschnigg seriously. It worried Mussolini too, who had forced Schuschnigg into surrender only because of the pressure which his own aggression in Abyssinia and Spain had enabled Hitler to put on him. Privately he murmured that Schuschnigg had "gone too far". He called a Three-Power Conference of the Rome bloc States in Vienna in November, which was attended by Ciano. Little was or could be achieved there to help Schuschnigg. Ciano had only just been to Berlin and Berchtesgaden, where he had heard Hitler's schemes for dividing Central and South-Eastern Europe into two spheres of influence, Austria of course falling into Germany's. Under these circumstances Ciano admitted that all he hoped to achieve was to see something of the night life of Vienna. But even his desire to follow the precedent established by King Edward VIII was checked by the austere Schuschnigg's frowns.

The situation in Central Europe now began to resemble a

scene in some crook play where someone has shot out the lights and the other actors, revolvers in hand, listen intently for a sign of movement to know in which direction they should prepare to shoot. There were so many autocratic Governments responsible to no one to explain their policies that now none of them quite realised what the others were up to. Diplomatic jitters and voyages of discovery in all directions ensued. Ciano went on to Hungary, Colonel Beck and Prince Paul of Yugoslavia went to London. Von Neurath, on hearing that the Vienna Conference would be held, hastened to Budapest—several dictators in search of the lights they had themselves shot out, all fumbling at their revolvers nervously. Captain Leopold, legal leader of the illegal Nazis, went to see Hitler quite openly and brought back glad tidings for the Nazis. Guido Schmidt went to Berlin and brought back Goering's proposals for acquiring Austrian foodstuffs in return for German arms, and for assimilating the Austrian army to the Reichswehr. The end was in sight—they had only to be patient and play their cards skilfully. Behind all this journeying was one important fact—that Mussolini had very discreetly intimated in Prague that it might be desirable for him to strengthen his hand against his friend Hitler, who was becoming altogether too powerful since the Austro-German agreement. What about a reinforcement of the Rome bloc by a *rapprochement* with the Little Entente—or at least with Czechoslovakia, who had such strong reasons to fear a German seizure of Austria? Prague was pleased, although sceptical for various good reasons of the possibility of success. I think it was somewhere about this time that the old Austrian Nazi General, Alfred Krauss, went to Berlin and warned Hitler that Mussolini was playing him false. Hitler replied, as Krauss on his return told one of his close Nazi friends, who told me :

“Do not worry, General—I have no illusions whatever about Mussolini, but I use him. I can trust him at the moment because he is in deadly fear of England—only fortunately the British Government does not know it, and is in deadly fear of him. He is convinced that some day, near or distant, Britain will make him pay for his behaviour to her over the Abyssinian war. As long as he continues afraid I can trust him—and not one moment longer.”

A week before the Three-Power Conference in Vienna Dr. Guido Schmidt, Austria's Foreign Secretary and Hitler's willing tool, announced that this Conference, which the Government

Press had been declaring would be one of the most important of recent years, would have no sensational results whatever. Von Neurath on his journey to Budapest had extracted assurances from Hungary that she would not play Italy's game against Germany. Angered, Schuschnigg delivered a sensational speech in Carinthia, declaring that Nazism in Austria was one of the country's greatest enemies. The final reason for this outburst was that the Governors of Upper Austria, Salzburg, Carinthia and Styria had warned Schuschnigg that if he did not put on the brake with regard to the Nazification of Austria, they could not be answerable for the consequences. Two of them had also warned him personally against the overweeningly conceited Guido Schmidt, who imagined, poor little man, that he was going to "outwit" both Hitler and Schuschnigg and become the ruler of a Nazified Austria himself. Hitler fooled him to the top of his bent—until the night of March 11th, 1938, when, his usefulness ended, he was quietly dropped from the political chessboard and given the Hirtenberg Munition Works which the Nazis had stolen from the owner, Fritz Mandl. It was diamond cut diamond—at home and internationally. Von Papen protested against the declaration that internal Nazism was a danger; Schuschnigg countered with a protest against Goering's assertion that it would soon be legal to shout "Heil Hitler" in Austria.

Now Schuschnigg began to remind the Nazis that if not an ace, he had at least a king up his sleeve—Otto von Habsburg. The Monarchists were encouraged to develop their propaganda on a much larger scale. Schuschnigg himself told the Fatherland Front that the awakening of respect for the old Austrian traditions must be continued. The question of the Monarchy would be decided by the Austrian people only, and at a date which he himself would fix. Baron Wiesner, leader of the Austrian Legitimists, went to Rome to plead his cause with the Duce and received a favourable but non-committal reply. Then Goering went to Rome and, with his usual bluntness, called Mussolini to heel. Support of a Habsburg restoration, he said, would be a breach of the Rome-Berlin axis and could not be tolerated. An even more abrupt warning was given to Schuschnigg by von Neurath, who came to Vienna for the purpose in February 1937. There was little mystery as to the objects of this visit, and Schuschnigg caused articles to appear



in the papers in advance declaring again that the Habsburg question was a purely internal Austrian affair and that no outside interference would be tolerated. The *Reichspost* demanded that Neurath should be told plainly that the Austro-German Pact had proved a great disappointment to Austria, particularly since it had not been followed by a modification of the attacks on Catholicism in Germany which Schuschnigg had hoped to see.

Von Neurath's visit was disastrous in every way. He told Schuschnigg without mincing his words that if any attempt were made to restore the Habsburgs, Germany would march. Schuschnigg defied him, declaring that although he had no present intention to restore the Habsburgs, he would not be intimidated by threats if he should feel later that the moment had come. While these conversations took place the streets outside were ringing with Nazi shouts of "Sieg Heil" and "Heil Hitler". The Nazis had brought up some of their toughest storm-troop detachments from Styria and Carinthia, and came on to the streets in thousands, nominally to welcome von Neurath, but actually, of course, to intimidate Schuschnigg. There were a number of charges by mounted police and several hundreds of the 15,000 demonstrators were arrested. The next day the Nazis were paid back in their own coin. The Fatherland Front brought up a few thousand Heimwehr toughs from Lower Austria and turned them loose on the demonstrating Nazis, who in the ensuing free fight got distinctly the worst of it.

Berlin ordered Mussolini to call his protégé to order in the matter of the Habsburgs. He did so by having a series of anti-Habsburg articles planted in the Italian press. This, though it was strenuously denied in London at the time, was the beginning of a real cooling off between Mussolini and Schuschnigg. The latter began at last to appreciate that his former protector's hands were tied. Ready as always to put a bold front on the worst situation, the plucky but harassed Chancellor of little Austria told Mussolini that under these conditions he saw no point in coming to Rome as had been arranged. This was in March. It was not until April that Signor Mussolini again invited—or commanded—Schuschnigg to meet him in Venice, where the Austrian Chancellor was to hear the worst news of his political career. In the meantime the Habsburg question became something of an issue in Austria. The picturesque papeal which the question of engineering somebody on to a



throne is supposed to have for newspaper readers as compared with the dull business of the election of a man as President by a vote of confidence of his fellow-citizens, had resulted in my writing from time to time quite a bit about Monarchist prospects in Austria. Nevertheless it was so clear to me that for the masses of the population the whole thing was a dead issue that I had never taken it seriously. Now I began to wonder whether I had not been wrong, for if I did not take the issue seriously, the Nazis clearly did, and signalled the fact by honouring the Legitimists with their hostility and their stink-bombs. Heimwehr Baron Neustädter-Stürmer, pro-Nazi Minister of Security, protected the bombers and ordered the release of those arrested; it was not by any means the first time that he had shown his tenderness towards the Nazis and his hostility towards the workers. He had also tried to curry favour with the Nazis by supporting their new leader, Captain Leopold, on every occasion. But his release of the Nazi stink-bombers went a bit too far, and Schuschnigg dismissed him. A big Monarchist demonstration in the streets was staged in connection with the requiem Mass for ex-Emperor Karl as a culmination of the campaign on April 4th. But it was not impressive.

On April 22nd Schuschnigg heard from Mussolini in Venice in terms which no longer left room for the faintest shadow of doubt, that he stood alone in the losing battle to save his country from the Nazis. Mussolini took rather the heavy-father line, adopted the more-in-sorrow-than-in-anger, it-hurts-me-more-than-it-hurts-you-my-son tone with Schuschnigg. His sentiments, he said, still stood where they did in July 1934. Austria's independence was still his greatest wish—and despite his subsequent complete abandonment of the Austrian cause, nobody who looks at the map of Europe to-day will doubt Mussolini's sincerity in this. Gladly, he said, would he repeat his gesture of July 1934 and again confront Hitler, whom he liked and trusted no better than did Schuschnigg himself, with a threat of war if he again attempted the rape of Austria. But his friend Schuschnigg must recognise that times had changed. Since 1934 Britain had allowed Germany to rearm. What in those days was an embryo force with which he was quite capable of dealing was now a great war machine. He himself had no longer the free hand of 1934. He had commitments in Abyssinia and commitments in Spain. Schuschnigg, he said, might as

well know in confidence that neither adventure was turning out as he had hoped. In Abyssinia even now he was only at the beginning of his troubles, and in Spain he felt safe only so long as the British Government could succeed in preventing France from lifting the embargo of arms to the Spanish Government. He felt the constant menace of a cold British hostility. In short, he was neither able nor particularly disposed any longer to play unpaid policeman for the protection of Austria and hence ultimately of Britain's route to the East, where he was in conflict with her. (He conveniently ignored his own situation on the Brenner.) Then there was the axis Rome-Berlin. He was absolutely dependent on the continuance of this for protection against Britain and for the ultimate success of his annexation of Abyssinia and invasion of Spain. And so his old friend Schuschnigg must understand that despite the utmost goodwill, there was very little now he could do to help him. If therefore he might offer a piece of advice, it would be to drop all this talk about the Habsburgs, which only made Germany livid, and to make friends with the adversary while there was yet time. He himself wanted Austria to live, but now she must yield a little to blackmail. Of course it would be dangerous to take Nazis into the Cabinet, but no doubt Schuschnigg, who was a wise man, would know just how far he could go. The great thing was to gain time, and who knew—who could say what might not turn up in a year's time? And now his dear Chancellor really must excuse him, as he had an important engagement to pay a call on a shipload of Nazi *Kraft-durch-Freude* tourists anchored just off the Piazzetta. And that was that.

"All this", said a member of the Schuschnigg delegation, who was present and told me the whole story, "passed off in quite polite form. What followed was a piece of sheer insolence. Young Ciano came in, nodded curtly at Schuschnigg, propped himself up against the wall with his hands in his pockets and proceeded to tell my Chancellor just where he got off. He was playing with fire, he was playing the fool and several other nice things. The game was up as regards the Nazis, and Schuschnigg might just as well recognise it to-day as to-morrow. For his part, he thought the Nazis were quite right, and that Schuschnigg had given them a tough deal. Hitler had told him that he was determined to get his way in Austria, and what Hitler said usually went—certainly with him, Ciano. Now, what Schuschnigg had

to do was to appoint half a dozen Nazi Ministers and quickly. The only question was, who should be appointed? ”

Kurt von Schuschnigg, his friend told me, was then at his best. A gentleman confronting a bully. He only said in his cool, indifferent tones: “ Thank you, Count, but I have already discussed all these matters with your father-in-law, who is authoritative for me, and I am really not interested in hearing your interpretation of what you think the Duce thinks ”. Ciano turned on his heel and walked out. He sent for the Duce’s tame news-man, Signor Gajda, and the same night, before Schuschnigg had even crossed the Italian frontier, he received a long telegram from his Legation in Rome, informing him that Gajda had published a sensational and hostile article in the *Giornale d’Italia* to the effect that Mussolini had told Schuschnigg to take Nazi Ministers into his Cabinet.

A man of less courage might at this have thrown in his hand—a man of wider vision have realised that the cause of Austrian independence having been abandoned by Fascist Italy, there was now really no longer any alternative but to secure the support of the Austrian people, repair the wrongs done to them and give the Left the chance they were always seeking of throwing their weight behind him in a Popular Front for the defence of Austrian liberties. Schuschnigg did neither. He went to Budapest with President Miklas and sounded the ground as to possibilities of Danubian co-operation. He found the atmosphere friendly but everyone just a trifle vague. M. Daranyi, the Hungarian Premier, was not a strong man, and he feared the growing Nazi movement in his own country, which was engineered and financed by Germany both among Hungarians and the German minority in Hungary. He had already induced the German Government some time before to withdraw its Minister, von Mackensen, because of the compromising evidence he had secured of Mackensen’s Nazi activities in his country, particularly as a channel for money supplies. He saw clearly that Hitler’s triumph in Austria would merely open up the way for the attack on Czechoslovakia, and that Hungary would either be destroyed first by peaceful means, so that Germany’s armies might use her to outflank the powerful Czechoslovak defence line along the German and Austrian frontiers, or that, Czechoslovakia having gone first, Hungary would become just the corridor for the march of the German armies to the Rumanian oil-fields and

granaries without which she would never be in a position to attack Britain and France.

But Daranyi in the first place was afraid of Germany, in the second he was a prisoner of his own and of his predecessors' past. For eighteen years they had told the Hungarian people that the Czechoslovak nation was a raging devil whose horns were called Masaryk and whose hoofs were called Beneš. The propaganda had been too intense and too efficient for its effects to be reversed overnight. And Schuschnigg needed a Hungarian-Czechoslovak reconciliation overnight, if not sooner, in order that the lesser Danubian States might come together in self-protection against Germany. Furthermore, Daranyi had much the same feelings about the Czechoslovak Republic as had Schuschnigg about his own Reds—both were tainted with democratic ideas.

I stayed in Budapest at the same hotel as Schuschnigg during these conferences, and saw how little success he was having in his desperate position. Outwardly Schuschnigg gave no sign. He was suave, urbane, friendly and self-composed. He seemed to be a man without nerves. For me he was becoming always more of a doomed figure—doomed by the limitations placed on him by his whole upbringing. Fate had cast him for a tragic rôle—the more tragic because it was his own narrow vision which prevented him from using his many statesmanlike qualities to escape from it. But one thing no one who knew Schuschnigg could doubt—that he would play the rôle with distinction to the end. A couple of months later I was in Budapest again, this time for the visit of von Neurath, whom I had accompanied on his Balkan tour. He had little difficulty in convincing Daranyi that in encouraging any ideas of co-operation amongst the Danubian States he would be running great risks for his country.

At home Schuschnigg made some attempt to placate the workers, but only through the meaningless channel of a speech to the Fatherland Front, which under the Schuschnigg dictatorship corresponded roughly to the Nazi Party in Germany and the Fascist Party in Italy, and was therefore as far as possible boycotted by the workers. In June the trial of a Nazi terrorist, Dr. Fritz Voitsche, for exploding bombs on the Southern Railway brought to light the fact that the Chancellor was already confronted with the fate of his predecessor—assassination. Voitsche's notebook showed that he was plotting the murder

of Schuschnigg and was hesitating between shooting him on one of his frequent visits to the grave of his wife and dropping bombs on the Chancellery from an airplane. In a shed on the outskirts of Vienna the police actually discovered the airplane he had intended to use. Voitsche, who had been deprived of his citizenship after fleeing the country, had returned with a false passport after receiving certain instructions in Germany. A highly confidential document issued from illegal Nazi headquarters was also discovered, stating that Hitler wished the Austrian Nazis to know that while his foreign political interests made it essential for him to have no contact "at present" with the Austrian Nazis, he wished them to achieve decisive results, but must leave the methods which they adopted entirely to them. Voitsche got twelve years; with all the other Nazi criminals he was released under Schuschnigg's last amnesty in February 1938. It was in June that Dr. Seyss-Inquart, whom Schuschnigg fondly believed to be a good Catholic, a Nazi and withal a patriotic Austrian, was appointed as *Volkspolitischer Referent* in the Fatherland Front with the mission of bringing about a *rapprochement* between the Nazis and Schuschnigg. Promptly, in July, he went to Berlin to see Hitler, and came back with orders to Schuschnigg to release all Nazi terrorists at once, or take the consequences. Schuschnigg refused. The consequences took the shape of a violent outburst of anti-Austrian propaganda throughout all the newspapers of Germany and those in other countries, not excepting Great Britain and America, which are controlled by the Goebbels propaganda machine. Against some of the wildest excesses of this campaign the Austrian Government made a protest in Berlin.

In October I went one night to attend a Fatherland Front demonstration for the Inner City of Vienna summoned by Dr. Schuschnigg. As usual, there was nothing spontaneous about it. No doubt a large proportion of those present supported the Chancellor; the great majority certainly did not want the Nazis in Austria. But the impression which I received from seeing all these people marched out in sections to a total of some 20,000, well screened by police, was depressing. Schuschnigg had nothing particular to say, and the demonstration might just as well not have been held for all the good it did him. Now he resorted to an expedient to increase the number of his supporters which made his position weaker than ever, but which pre-

sumably afforded him some satisfaction. He announced that the membership lists of the Fatherland Front would be closed at the end of October and that he expected all patriotic Austrians to be found inside its ranks by then. He knew now that he was absolutely dependent on getting the support of the workers. But so aloof was he from the world of common men that he fondly imagined that the forcing of Socialists into the ranks of the Fatherland Front would bring this about. Shameless economic pressure was applied, and it was allowed to become known that non-membership of the Front would mean exclusion from such things as public employment, licences to trade (without which no one could open or carry on any business), the issue of driving licences, the award of scholarships to children and all State relief. By such means he increased the paper strength of the Fatherland Front considerably—and gained precisely nothing. On October 22nd he paid another hurried visit to Hungary, just after the discovery that the Nazis were circulating hundreds of thousands of leaflets among the Austrian troops inciting them to disobey their officers and to revolt. Daranyi had reluctantly been forced to accept an invitation to see Hitler in Berlin in November, and Schuschnigg was anxious to hear what line he was going to take. Guido Schmidt, too, went to Berlin—ostensibly to attend Goering's Trophy Exhibition, but whether to look at the trophies or to help Hitler to the acquisition of another, Schuschnigg could not be sure. How far Nazi activities in the army had gone was revealed in November, when the discovery of a letter addressed by an officer in the Rennweg Barracks in Vienna showed that regular reports of Austrian precautionary measures against a Nazi rising were being sent to Berlin. A dozen officers and several hundred other ranks were arrested. They were all members of the secret "ring of Nazi soldiers". I told the whole story of the arrests. It was officially—and angrily—denied. But it was true.

I think it was at about the beginning of November 1937 that I first noticed a distinct change in the attitude of my Nazi acquaintances. Those whom I knew high up in the illegal Movement were somehow never available when I wanted to talk to them. Those whom I knew among the rank and file were extremely eager to talk. The burden of their conversation was always the same.

"We have pretty well got Schuschnigg where we want him",



they said. "Mussolini is now completely tied to Hitler. Chamberlain is scared stiff of him and sends Halifax to beg for terms, trying to buy him off in Central Europe by offering colonies. Chamberlain has got the reply that Central Europe is Germany's business, not his, and that Germany will talk colonies to England when she is ready to take them, a little later—not yet. And anyway, Chamberlain has made it obvious enough to us that his guiding principle is to back Nazism against all its internal enemies. We have the easy game of threatening him alternately with our strength and our weakness. The Front Populaire in France is breaking up, and soon France—thanks to Chamberlain's ingenious 'non-intervention' swindle—is going to be immobilised by a Fascist dictatorship of Franco which will hold 300,000 French troops on the Pyrenees and prevent her from using them against Germany. There is no hope for Schuschnigg on the Danube, because unless Italy backs Austria, Czechoslovakia daren't, and we have such a foothold in Hungary that Daranyi is prepared to throw up the sponge at any moment. Thanks to February 1934, the workers won't go with Schuschnigg. The game is ours! Of all silly things, the idiotic English are now trying to find out Mussolini's price for betraying Hitler. Of course Mussolini will name the price—and betray the British. The Fascist Powers distrust one another, it is true. But they hate the democracies and they've got to go—the British among them—and the stronger Hitler gets, the nearer Britain comes to losing her own Parliament to a British dictatorship."

In the ground floor of the house where I lived, Habsburgergasse 10, was the headquarters of a detachment of Dr. Schuschnigg's Sturmkorps, formed in imitation of Hitler's S.S. Guards to combat the Nazis. Once a week it suited me to walk to my door with a certain rank-and-file Viennese Nazi who up to the last always swore to me that he was not one. "Give me a dozen tough lads of the Nazi storm-troopers", he would say at this period, "and I'll guarantee to settle the accounts of that gang before you can say 'knife'." (A couple of months later I was to see it done, although not under his command.) There was the lust of plunder in the eyes of all the rank-and-file Nazis whom I met in these days. "Just wait until we can get at the Jews", they said, "it won't be long now before we see things happen in Vienna. And a lot of other people beside the Jews



are going to find that they have backed the wrong horse and pay the penalty.' Then would follow the names of people, starting with Schuschnigg's, over whose anticipated sufferings they would lick their lips. But as far as our news-telegrams went, all was quiet on the Western front. There was nothing to report—there was going to be.

On my way down to Bucharest in January 1938 to see how that most ludicrous of dictators since General Pangalos in Greece, M. Octavian Goga, was planning to plunder the Jews, I stepped off at Budapest to cover the last Rome Bloc Conference that was ever to be. There was not much to be written about the relations between Schuschnigg and Ciano, because there were none. In the Hotel Dunapalota, where they were both staying and I also managed to squeeze in, Schuschnigg and Ciano played shepherd and shepherdess in those little meteorological Swiss chalets which tell you the weather. The Hungarian Foreign Minister, M. Kanya, brought Schuschnigg from the station to his hotel at 11. At 11.30 Schuschnigg went out. At 12 Kanya returned bringing Ciano. Ciano retired and Schuschnigg came home for a drink in the hall. Ciano came down and went out, Schuschnigg went to bed. Schuschnigg gave a supper-party, Ciano went to bed. They kept this up during the three-day conference. Schuschnigg had not forgotten Venice, and he was not going to grovel.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE BETRAYAL OF SCHUSCHNIGG

**D**URING THE AUTUMN OF 1937 I HEARD A FUNNY STORY from a volatile Central European diplomat at a certain official reception.

“Have you heard the latest about Hitler?” he said. “You know he has retired to Berchtesgaden and refuses to be disturbed about affairs of State? Well, from my colleague in Berlin I have heard exactly what he is doing. He’s got enormous collections of picture postcards of Vienna and the principal cities and towns of the Austrian provinces, and is devoting long hours to deciding which are to become the future Brown Houses [Nazi headquarters] of Austria. Then he has got a great plan of the streets of Vienna pinned up on the wall, and sits for hours at a draughtsman’s table, designing architectural monstrosities by which he is going to replace some of Vienna’s soft and dreamy baroque façades after his triumphal entry as conqueror. My colleague’s cipher dispatch concluded with the word ‘danger or dotage? I don’t know’.” We both laughed, and I asked him if he knew the story of the disappointed Russian airman in the next war, who refused when over Berlin to drop his bombs, saying to the pilot “Home, Tovarish Nikolajewitch. We can destroy nothing here—Adolf’s anticipated us.”

A fortnight later I heard the picture-postcard and street-plan story again from another quarter—from an anything but volatile Austrian official. This time the narrator’s gravity stopped me laughing. But although he told me that the Government were rather worried about this fully confirmed story, I felt that if the Austrians had no more serious preoccupation than this, there was not much to worry about. It was a very short-sighted dismissal of a grave symptom. Soon there was a graver. Quite authentic news reached the Austrian Home Office via the Quai d’Orsay and the French Ambassador in Berlin, François Poncet, that Hitler had remarked before witnesses, “I shall soon have Schuschnigg’s head”. This was

in January 1938. François Poncet also reported back that an alarmed von Neurath had told him of Hitler's absolute determination to crush Schuschnigg regardless of the means he might have to employ.

In January 1938 there was a police raid on the headquarters in the Teinfaltstrasse of the so-called "Committee of Seven" appointed under the fatal July 1936 Agreement to bring about conciliation between the Nazis and the Fatherland Front. In reality, as everybody in Vienna knew except the police who did not want to know, it was the headquarters of the illegal Nazi movement, called by the Socialists and Communists the "Brown House". In charge of it was Captain Leopold, a man who had lost his post in the Austrian army as politically unreliable and been appointed—it was an open secret—by Hitler as the head of the illegal Nazi Party. Here for months storm-troopers in semi-uniform had been on duty, the law set at defiance, and the forbidden Hitler greeting employed. All this was camouflaged by traitors among the police. Three months before, I had reported a most significant incident to which I could get no one to pay serious attention. The Vienna *Tagblatt* had denounced Leopold for taking money from the Jews, saying that two Jewish butchers named Neumann had paid large sums of money for immunity from Nazi persecution, which Leopold had put into his own pocket. Thereupon Leopold issued a statement for publication and threatened a libel action. The statement declared the full truth—that the brothers Neumann, despite their names, were not Jews, but perfectly good Nazis who had been afraid to continue their subscriptions to the Party after the murder of Dollfuss and the defeat of the Nazi Putsch. Now, however, said Leopold, they had come to him in the Teinfaltstrasse and with splendid Nazi loyalty had paid up all their back subscriptions to the illegal movement since that date. Now, it seemed to me that if Leopold could openly proclaim that he was collecting money from illegal Nazis for an illegal Party and not be arrested, police treachery to the State had just about reached the limit. If Schuschnigg could not have Leopold arrested at once and institute a drastic clean-up among the police, the end must be drawing near. Only one Legation—by far the most alert in Vienna—paid attention to this business when I spoke of it, asked me for full details and sent home a long cipher cable on the subject.

Leopold's deputy was a civil engineer named Tavs. In January he went a little further than Leopold, summoned some of the foreign correspondents and said :

“ Don't you find it rather remarkable that I, one of the leaders of the illegal and anti-State Nazi Party, can sit openly at my desk in this house with Captain Leopold? Such relations exist between us and the Führer's Chancellery in Berlin that we do not even require written orders from Adolf Hitler, but know how to co-operate with him on the slightest hint.”

Schuschnigg went livid when this was published and at last had the Teinfaltstrasse raided. In one safe the police found a cipher document signed with the initials “ R. H.”—Rudolf Hess, the Führer's deputy ; this they were afraid to publish, and gave the document instead the name of the “ Tav's Plan ”. In the next drawer of the same safe the Nazis had obligingly locked up a key to the cipher ! (The Austrian Nazis really should not complain so much if all their dreams of job-hunting have been ruined through Hitler introducing a little Prussian efficiency by giving all the fat jobs to his friends from Germany.) Tavs was arrested, and Schuschnigg insisted that he should be tried for high treason in open court, when the damning document of Rudolf Hess would be read out. The utmost pressure was exerted from Germany to prevent this, and for the moment details of the document were suppressed. In consequence a silly story went round the world that the Tavs Plan was one for Nazis disguised as Legitimists to break into the German Legation and assassinate von Papen. Actually von Papen was at the moment Hitler's principal agent (together with Guido Schmidt, the Austrian Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs) in the plot for the betrayal of Schuschnigg.

The truth about the Tavs Plan for 1938 was quite bad enough without exaggeration. It contained instructions from Rudolf Hess to Leopold and Tavs to see that early in April the Austrian Nazis should begin setting the law at defiance. They were to start employing the Hitler salute, put on the forbidden Swastika badges and hoist illegal Swastika banners. The number of police everywhere secretly enrolled in the S.S. formations who were determined to break their oath of loyalty to the Government was stated to be sufficient to ensure that order could not be restored by police alone. Where the police were sufficiently helpful, public buildings were to be seized as part

of a general Putsch. In any case things were to be pushed so far that Schuschnigg would be obliged either to abandon control or to employ troops to maintain order. When the first shot was fired, the German troops, who would have been concentrated around the frontiers on the excuse of holding manœuvres, would invade Austria and Hitler would advance the plea that he would not see "German blood shed by Germans".

The British Government, the plan asserted, could be relied on to keep quiet and to try to calm the French by assurances that the German army had invaded Austria only to preserve the peace of Europe; Mr. Chamberlain's Government might make a formal protest, but as it would not dare to attempt serious action, it would try to put a good face on the defeat and accept assurances that the people of Austria desired the move. If the French proved troublesome, a plebiscite could then be held on the lines which had worked so well in Germany; French and British observers with no powers might even be invited to look on if necessary. The objective was the annexation of Austria by Germany forthwith. If the French made too much difficulty a customs union of the two countries together with the dismissal of Schuschnigg and the installation of a purely Nazi Government might have to be accepted as a stepping-stone for the moment.

Schuschnigg dissolved the "Committee of Seven" and shut down the Teinfaltstrasse.

Hitler did two things. First he sent for General Fritsch and told him that he was going to set the advice of the General Staff at defiance, as he had done so successfully in the reoccupation of the Rheinland, and invade Austria. Fritsch told Hitler that he was again risking a European war and that Germany was quite unable to face the prospect. She had too few fully trained officers, very little rubber, petrol for only a few months' war, insufficient zinc, lead and copper. Her food reserves were almost nil. Hitler told Fritsch that he had heard all this before, but that there would be no European war, that he had Mussolini in his pocket, that the National Government in Britain was in a state of paralytic fear of Germany and playing for time, although time was on his, Hitler's, side. In France the Popular Front was practically non-existent, and Britain was trying to get into power the French reactionaries, who would take the same line as the British National Government. France, he said, had still British dominion status—no more. Eden was certainly a

danger to Germany, but Chamberlain was going to get rid of Eden—of that he had full assurance. Fritsch could undertake the invasion of Austria or Fritsch could go. Fritsch went.

Secondly, Hitler sent for von Papen, catching him at Linz on his way back from Berlin to Vienna and summoning him to Berchtesgaden. The German Chancellor told him that he was determined to clean up Austria without delay. The situation at home was such that he had to produce a new foreign political triumph to keep the people quiet. Papen warned him that Schuschnigg was in possession of very grave evidence against him in the shape of the Tavs Plan. Hitler's reply was, "I give you orders to bring Schuschnigg to Berchtesgaden. Leave the rest to me." Ever since his narrow escape from assassination on June 30th, 1934, Papen has known what stands behind such orders. He saw clearly that if he failed to present his Führer with Schuschnigg's head on a silver charger, he would lose his own. Hitler summoned someone else to Berlin—Dr. Seyss-Inquart, whom Schuschnigg had made head of the pro-Nazi "conciliators" in the Fatherland Front, and had only just appointed to be member of the Austrian Council of State, where he took a new oath of loyalty to Austria. On learning of Schuschnigg's discovery of Rudolf Hess' Putsch plans, Hitler cancelled the session of the Reichstag summoned for January 30th. His speech before the Reichstag had been designed to prepare the way for Hess' plan by inciting the Austrian Nazis to revolt. Now he could not commit himself publicly in this way. In sending Fritsch on leave and simultaneously dismissing von Neurath, he cleared the decks for action. From the Reichswehr and the Foreign Office he removed all elements known to be opposed to the rape of Austria.

Back in Vienna, Papen got hold of the young Foreign Minister Guido Schmidt, whose overweening vanity made him bridle if he could get someone to refer to him as the "Anthony Eden of Austria", and told him that he must help in inveigling Schuschnigg to visit Hitler in Berchtesgaden. Schuschnigg, as usual, had been betrayed by his amazing inability to read characters into giving his confidence to another traitor in the shape of Guido Schmidt. Schmidt was often called pro-Nazi—among others, by Lord Londonderry. This was not quite accurate, although convenient. In reality Guido Schmidt was just pro-Guido Schmidt. Only because he regarded Schuschnigg's as a sinking

ship and himself capable of making circles round all other European personalities, including Hitler and Mussolini, and because his extremely wealthy wife derived her income from textile factories just across the German frontier in Czechoslovakia, which he expected would be annexed almost simultaneously with Austria, was Guido Schmidt eager to take a hand in betraying his chief. There was clearly no time to be lost, if Papen was to preserve his head, in bringing Guido Schmidt up to scratch in the matter of fulfilling his promise of six months before to get Schuschnigg by hook or by crook to visit Hitler. At that time the plot had only been one to discredit Schuschnigg in the eyes of his supporters by making it appear that he had gone to sue for terms. Schuschnigg had refused point-blank again and again to do anything so foolish. Had he stuck to this refusal in February 1938, Hitler's plans would again have been checkmated.

Guido Schmidt brought Papen to Schuschnigg, saying that he had a very friendly and most important confidential proposal to make on behalf of the Führer. Papen delivered the urgent personal invitation and told him that Herr Hitler had known nothing of Rudolf Hess's Putsch plans and had been shocked when Papen gave him the details. Furthermore, Hitler found himself in a quandary, and if Schuschnigg would do his duty as a good German and would help him out, the Führer would be eternally grateful. The Anglo-Italian *rapprochement* was causing him grave anxiety, and he wanted at once to come to a friendly arrangement with Schuschnigg to include fresh and binding guarantees for Austrian independence. This would set Mussolini's mind at rest and avoid forcing him into a pact with Britain which would break the great anti-Comintern axis. What the Führer was offering was the reinforcement of the (German Government's) guarantees for Austria's independence given in July 1936, by his own personal assurances. Here Guido Schmidt interposed to reinforce Papen's arguments, telling Schuschnigg that if they missed this chance they would both regret it for ever. He praised Schuschnigg's wisdom in suppressing so far the details of the Tavs Plan, saying that this and the threat to try Tavs publicly would enable him to make his own terms with Hitler in return for a promise of the suppression from the public of these incriminating facts. The "purge" in the Reichswehr of February 4th—actually, as everyone now knows, undertaken



in preparation for the invasion of Austria—said Guido Schmidt, had left Hitler in a terribly weak position. Now was the moment which might never return for Schuschnigg to exact terms and obtain peace for ever from Germany's plotting with the Austrian Nazis. What would Mr. Neville Chamberlain say if he learned that Schuschnigg had neglected to take this chance of appeasing Berlin? He was so terribly keen on everybody standing well with Hitler. Papen actually had the audacity, in the face of recent history, to employ to Schuschnigg the phrase "You will have then the protection of Adolf Hitler's glittering and immaculate word of honour behind which everyone who obtains it feels secure. Austria has been threatened from Germany. Use this wonderful opportunity to make peace on your own terms, and the threats will cease for ever. The Führer will let no one undertake any action which might sully his word of honour, once given." After the July 1936 Agreement, Schuschnigg had broadcast, in describing it, the quotation: "The brother seeks his brother". Papen and Guido Schmidt, both of whom knew exactly what was in store for the wretched man they were betraying to his doom, must surely have heard the jingle of silver—thirty pieces of it—as the former recalled that quotation and concluded his appeal with the incredible phrase:

"Go to Berchtesgaden, Herr Bundeskanzler, and you will talk to our Führer and Reichskanzler as one brother to another". Schuschnigg knew as well as any man Papen's reputation for intrigue and double-dealing. That entertaining rogue made so little secret of the reputation which he enjoyed that at a luncheon at the German Legation he once made me and some friends laugh till our sides ached with an elaborate discourse explaining how he was the simplest of souls, who, in a dozen incidents which he related from his career, had, by a chain of amazing coincidences, been made to appear intriguer when he was merely the guileless victim of intrigue. Schuschnigg would never have been deceived by Papen alone, but the earnest assurances of his close friend Guido Schmidt destroyed his just suspicions. Making one condition only, to which Papen readily assented—that the fact of the projected visit and conversation with Hitler was to be kept an absolute secret—Schuschnigg yielded. He confirmed the death-warrant of Austria which he had signed in July 1936.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE AGONY IN BERCHTESGADEN

ON SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 12TH, KURT VON SCHUSCHNIGG crossed the Rubicon—locally known as the River Salzach—at Salzburg, and within ten minutes was on German soil en route for Hitler's mountain eyrie, Obersalzberg, near Berchtesgaden. From there the Führer had for years been accustomed to look into the Austrian province of Salzburg. How often from that lovely Alpine garden had he dreamed of the day when he would force himself upon his native country which had rejected him, his self-proclaimed godhood and his maniac racial theories of "Blood and Soil". Long before he left Vienna by special train on Friday night, Schuschnigg had had grave doubts of the wisdom of this step. At the last he had sent for Richard Schmitz, the Clerical Burgomaster of Vienna, and told him that if he did not return from Germany, Schmitz was to assume the Chancellorship. Thus Schuschnigg actually feared murder, kidnapping or being held to ransom, which would have been a very natural fear on visiting the stronghold of some robber Baron in Bavaria several centuries earlier. It is one to which statesmen of to-day must evidently accustom themselves if they go to sup with dictators without a long spoon. In Salzburg, too, on exchanging his special train for a car, he had told the local Security Director in strict confidence where he was going, and had given instructions that if he were not back by nine o'clock that night, the frontiers should be closed and put into a state of defence. Characteristically, Schuschnigg provided for the defence of Austria and continuity of her Government, but took no measures for his personal security or rescue.

On that fateful drive, even though Guido Schmidt sat beside him—perhaps because Guido Schmidt sat beside him—together with von Papen and a young man from the Austrian Foreign Office, Schuschnigg must have felt himself the loneliest man in Europe. Hardly had he crossed the frontier before he was surrounded by a sea of military activity, deliberately ordered

by Hitler to put his victim in a proper state of mind for the forthcoming interview. February 12th, 1938—four years to the day since Dollfuss and Fey, whose Cabinet colleague Schuschnigg had been at that time, had launched their ruthless attack on the Vienna workers. Ever since these had sternly refused their support, the lack of which was now forcing Schuschnigg to undertake this journey to Canossa. Schuschnigg was far too sentimental at heart, far too sensitive, far too Viennese, not to have remembered the anniversary. Had he not done so, his secret police would have reminded him of it, for, as on the eve of every other 12th February since 1934, there had been widespread raids to lay suspected underground Socialists by the heels and prevent any mourning demonstrations for the fallen. The echo of the thunder of the 1934 guns must have echoed in Schuschnigg's ears louder than the songs of the birds on that warm February 1938 morning, with its promise of coming spring, as his car rounded the curves of the Alpine high road, passing through the almost invisible army of Gestapo detectives and the picked S.S. bodyguard who watch so carefully over the life of Germany's well-beloved ruler.

Schuschnigg already knew that his situation was tragic and isolated. He had informed the Ministers of Italy, France and Great Britain on Thursday, two days before, of his projected journey, and had more or less been told that he must do what he thought best. Mussolini's answer when Schuschnigg telephoned him personally was "My dear fellow, I have the fullest confidence in your statesmanlike gifts". (This Guido Schmidt promptly sent his satellite in the Austrian Press Department, Dr. Wilhelm Wolff, to report to Berlin. Wolff was later rewarded by one week's office as Foreign Minister in the shadow "Cabinet" of Seyss-Inquart.) By a very highly placed Austrian who enjoyed his confidence, I was assured that Schuschnigg had asked whether he could expect any backing from Britain and France if he resisted any demands of Hitler's which might be incompatible with the independence of Austria, and received a curt negative reply. But this the British Government subsequently denied.

The ordeal to which the Austrian Chancellor was subjected by the German Chancellor as the latter's guest that Saturday must be unique in diplomatic history—if the word diplomatic can be used in connection with such outrageous scenes. From the outset the little Austrian would-be painter and ex-lance corporal from the Vienna dosshouses treated the Austrian

doctor of law and General's son with the utmost insolence of which he was capable. Schuschnigg's friends told me that after the ordeal he got back to Austria that night completely dazed and kept repeating: "I cannot believe that it really happened—I cannot believe that anyone could have treated me like this". Soon the Führer had worked himself up into one of his "states" where all self-control vanishes and he screams and howls like a candidate for the padded cell. Again and again have I had described to me by people who have seen him in this artificially produced but finally uncontrollable frenzy what an appalling prospect it is to know that the destinies of the great German people are in the hands of such a man. No wonder that even a certain notoriously pro-Nazi British diplomat is said by his friends to have remarked in Berlin, in connection with one of Hitler's diatribes to him in 1938 on the subject of Czechoslovakia, that he felt that seventy-five million Germans were now controlled by a madman. Then this diplomat went on to draw the strange inference that Britain ought to humour the madman by yielding to him at every point. But what need is there of quoting British or other diplomats when everyone of you must have heard—if not, you should take the next opportunity of hearing—Herr Hitler on the radio working himself up into one of his frenzies.

"It is not quite madness", an Austrian diplomat back in Vienna from abroad remarked to me in February 1938. "It is something near it, with still something of simulation and a good deal of cunning." Hitler deliberately calls the world's attention to his own unbalanced state: "Beware of me—beware!" he cries, "you can see I am not normal. Don't irritate me, don't cross me, don't refuse me anything, or I shall snap the last links which tie me to sanity and you will have a raving lunatic to deal with!" This, anyway, was the impression that all Schuschnigg's friends got from what he told them of the Berchtesgaden interview. Here is how that interview progressed.

After being left to cool his heels awhile in an ante-room, Schuschnigg was introduced at noon precisely to the Presence in Hitler's huge winter-garden, hung with Oriental carpets. Adolf Hitler remained sitting, and did not offer his hand to Schuschnigg, whom he treated as a prisoner at the bar. Although Schuschnigg addressed him with his proper title of "*Herr Reichskanzler*", Hitler disdained to give Schuschnigg his titles of

"*Herr Bundeskanzler*", "*Herr Doctor*" or his "*Von*", and spoke to him throughout as "*Herr Schuschnigg*". In the language of the gutter, Hitler vilified him as "dwarf", "Jesuit's spawn" and "Planetta-murderer". He shouted at him:

"How have you dared all these years to oppress and torture *my* people—*my* German people in Austria? Now your hour has come. God has made me Führer and ruler of every man and woman of German blood, in every country on earth. You shall bow to my will as all the rest of the world shall bow, or I will break you. I demand obedience from you and shall enforce it, if necessary with my armies. You have played your last card, Herr Schuschnigg, and you will accept and sign here at once before you leave this house the terms I have prepared for you, or I give the order to march into Austria immediately." In turns Hitler bullied and shouted, burst into tears when he spoke of "My people—my dear, dear, tortured German people", and shook his fist in the face of the Austrian Chancellor, who looked at him with a cool aloofness which only increased the other's frenzy. Again and again he shouted at Schuschnigg: "Listen to me, I tell you, listen to me! I am the greatest of all Germans—the greatest German who has ever lived, do you hear?" pounding the table with his fist. "My people in Austria are starving, Herr Schuschnigg", he shouted. "I am going to march in—my people call me. There is not one country which will lift a finger to save you, and I have three divisions ready to march."

Schuschnigg, still standing, took out his cigarette-case. Hitler shouted at him: "I allow no one to smoke in my presence"—then jumped up and said in conventionally quiet tones, as he pressed the bell on his table, "Herr Schuschnigg, I want to introduce you to General von Reichenau, who will be the Commander of my Armies of Occupation in Austria." As the General entered, Hitler threw a document at Schuschnigg containing eleven demands and said: "General von Reichenau, before Herr Schuschnigg studies my ultimatum I want you to take him into the next room and show him the whole of your strategic plans for the occupation and garrisoning of Austria". When von Reichenau had finished his cold-blooded task, the doors were flung open and a servant announced: "Luncheon is served".

The lonely Schuschnigg sat down to Hitler's table, surrounded by bitter enemies and false friends—von Ribbentrop, General Keitel (who in June 1938 was to spend four days in Hungary to

report on the prospects of an invasion of Czechoslovakia through the flat and undefended marshlands of the Danube near Komorn), General Sperrle, General von Reichenau, von Papen, Dr. Guido Schmidt, Dr. Peter (of the Austrian Foreign Office) and Dr. Dietrich, Press Chief to Hitler. The meal, consisting of soup, meat and a Viennese *Apfelstrudel*, was served in absolute silence. Only when the butler came round with the liqueurs, offering them, of course, first to the Führer and only afterwards to the Führer's guests, Hitler waved him aside and, staring hard at Schuschnigg, said in a very loud tone:

"I allow anyone to drink, for to see someone drinking is no discomfort to a non-drinker. Smoking, on the other hand, is unseemly in the presence of someone who dislikes it."

Schuschnigg remarked with calm politeness: "I must admit, Herr Reichskanzler, that it disturbs me a good deal to be unable to smoke at important conferences". Curtly the Führer said: "Very well, then, if you wish to smoke in spite of what I have said, I allow you to smoke one cigarette". Still outwardly unperturbed, Schuschnigg lit up and continued to smoke until he left at 9 p.m.

After lunch, having, as he reckoned, reduced Schuschnigg to a suitable state of alarm by the scenes of the morning, Hitler continued proceedings in a comparatively sane manner. Guido Schmidt was called in to play his part, and at once began to press Schuschnigg to yield to Hitler's demands. Schuschnigg has been bitterly blamed in Austria by his own supporters for his surrender that afternoon. Certainly he betrayed them and the cause for which he and they had so sincerely and devotedly struggled for four years—that of Austria's independence. But before casting stones they might have asked themselves whether they under such terrible circumstances could have done better. Schuschnigg knew that from outside no help was to be expected. He was absolutely alone, fighting for a cause which was that of at least two-thirds of his people, but thanks to the mistakes of Dollfuss and himself, he could not count on the active support of more than twenty to twenty-five per cent. By now he knew himself to have been betrayed by his fellow-Catholic, von Papen, and by his own Foreign Secretary. His great protector, Mussolini, had jauntily left him to his fate. Britain and France would not lift a finger to save him. Czechoslovakia without the backing of Italy was herself in too great danger to move. He had seen Germany's war machines rolling up to his very frontiers that morning and the detailed plans for the invasion. The



German Dictator had subjected him to a cruel and totally unexpected ordeal of personal insult and vilification. And yet, Kurt von Schuschnigg turned and stood at bay.

Eight of Hitler's eleven points he refused to accept, telling his adversary that even if he gave the signature demanded it would be worthless, because these were matters of the Constitution which not he, but only the head of the State, Wilhelm Miklas, could decide. On the points which he was able to settle, said Schuschnigg, he would yield. These were anyway fatal to Austria—the surrender of the Ministry of the Interior and of Security to a prominent Nazi, an unrestricted amnesty for the Nazis, including all the criminal bomb-throwers and murderers, and the flinging open of the doors of the Fatherland Front—his great defensive organisation against Nazi domination—to the Nazis on a basis of full equality. After long deliberation Schuschnigg said he would hand over the Interior and Security Ministry to a Nazi who was a personal friend of his, Dr. Seyss-Inquart. Hitler pretended not even to know the name and pronounced it incorrectly, which reassured Schuschnigg that Seyss-Inquart, as he later wrote to a friend of his, “has only met Hitler once. He is a good Catholic, an open supporter of Austrian independence and enjoys my fullest confidence.” Six weeks later Hitler was to make the man whose name he pretended that he could not pronounce Governor-General of Austria.

Still Schuschnigg stood out against his mighty enemy for terms. Von Papen, he told him, had inveigled him into coming to Berchtesgaden by saying that the Führer would reinforce the guarantee of Austria's independence given by the Third Reich in the 1936 Agreement by his personal guarantee. Schuschnigg demanded that, in return for his surrender on the three points, Hitler should give this guarantee publicly in his forthcoming Reichstag speech. Further, he asked that Hitler should also, as Papen had said that he would, openly warn the Austrian Nazis that they would in future have to maintain their own ideology as best they could within the framework and according to the laws of the Fatherland Front and the Austrian Constitution. The illegal Nazi organisations and conspirators must be told that the organisations in the Third Reich had severed all connections with them. Herr Hitler gave his word—that famous “glittering and immaculate word of honour behind which everyone who obtains it feels secure”, that his Reichstag speech should contain the promised reassurances. Guido



Schmidt eagerly assured Hitler that he would persuade Miklas to accept all the other eight points, which included the surrender of the Ministries of War, Justice and Education to the Nazis. Hitler told Schuschnigg that the German army would remain concentrated on his frontiers until the last of his terms had been accepted.

Shortly after 10, Schuschnigg returned to his native country a broken man. He found the frontiers had already been closed, in accordance with his own instructions given that morning for the Salzburg garrison, which he had forgotten in the heat of the day's events. He got into the special train waiting for him, and reached Vienna at 3 a.m. on Sunday.

The news that Schuschnigg had gone to see Hitler in Berchtesgaden came to Vienna like a bolt from the blue at noon on Saturday. Schuschnigg had taken every precaution to keep the visit secret, knowing that the Austrian Nazis, and with them most of the world, would say that he had gone to sue for terms. But von Papen had taken equal precautions to ensure that the necessary indiscretion was committed. The official Austrian Press Bureau had stated on Friday that Schuschnigg had left Vienna for a tour of the Austrian provinces. When we newspaper-men telephoned there on Saturday to ask for confirmation of the Berchtesgaden rumours, we were first told that they were absolutely untrue. Later it was admitted that the visit had been paid on the invitation of Herr Hitler, and that "this informal meeting arose out of the mutual desire to confer on all questions concerning relations between the Reich and Austria". "Informal" was good.

Had the impetuous and half-educated peasant's son Dollfuss, with his amazing instinct for publicity, been at the helm, one can well imagine that he would have taken the first plane to Paris and summoned the world's Press to hear from him a statement prefaced by some such sentences as: "Gentlemen, I am going to tell you the story of the most outrageous bullying of a small and independent State by a mighty neighbour of which the world has ever heard". Had the hot-tempered and disdainful Starhemberg been at the helm, one can imagine him returning shout for shout and fist-shake for fist-shake in the face of the Führer, and then going back to issue arms impulsively to every single man in Austria, regardless of his political colour, who was prepared to die in defence of its independence.

Schuschnigg showed his usual fatal inability to judge men.

His tactics were as bad as they could be. Instead of revealing to the world the story of his outrageous treatment in Berchtesgaden, the bullying and the threats of invasion of the Führer, he unconsciously played the latter's game by covering up the whole story and telling the Foreign Office and the Press Department to issue on Sunday optimistic reports which entirely deceived the Diplomatic Corps as well as the foreign Press for more than twenty-four hours.

While Schuschnigg was busy relating to President Miklas the incredible story of his treatment in Berchtesgaden, Hofrat Weber, head of the official Austrian News Agency, was obeying instructions to calm the Press and to talk of the conclusion of a "happy peace" between Schuschnigg and Hitler. The home Press, of course, had to print this stuff; it was up to us of the foreign Press to believe what we chose. What Hofrat Weber told us on the 13th—Sunday—was that there had been a friendly conversation concerning a more exact interpretation on Germany's side of the 1936 Agreement for the preservation of Austria's independence and the checking of Nazi violence in Austria as well as—blessed refuge of official apologists when pressed by foreign correspondents for the truth about political crises—"economic matters". Even the rank-and-file Nazis were deceived by all this official flummery. On Sunday evening some of them were distinctly puzzled and disheartened, and were muttering to me that Hitler had betrayed them for the second time—the first being his disowning of the Nazi Putschists in 1934 after the murder of Dollfuss had shocked the world. I knew that this official optimism was not genuine, but I was far from guessing at the real truth, which I learned only on the following Tuesday. I did know at once, however, that the crux of Hitler's demands had been the handing over of the control of police to a Nazi and that the candidate was Seyss-Inquart; further, that Hitler had demanded that Schuschnigg should surrender control of foreign affairs to his Secretary of State, Guido Schmidt, and make him Foreign Minister. It was also perfectly clear to me that the appointment of Seyss-Inquart would be the end of Austria. It would be for Seyss-Inquart to decide what were and what were not infringements of the law, to order toleration or suppression by the police of Nazi activities and to give full rein to Nazi propaganda.

I had met Seyss-Inquart years before at a dinner-party, and realised what an insidious danger a Nazi of his type would be.

He was one of those Nazis who had always said that he deplored the bomb-throwing activities of the Party—a so-called “Pronounced National”. The wire-pullers in Berlin and Munich had long before hit on him as the very man to acquire Schuschnigg’s confidence and undermine his position. A very intelligent, pleasant-looking young lawyer, with a good practice, of modest bearing and good manners, no ranter, screamer or shouter, but one who in Vienna *salons* constantly spoke of the superiority of spiritual and moral over physical weapons, he seemed to Schuschnigg unimpeachable. True, he was a great theoretical supporter of the Anschluss, and had founded the Austro-German People’s League years before to propagate it, but there was no great harm in that. And Schuschnigg found so much in common with this friend of his in the opposite camp. Both were lawyers, and together had served their Emperor with courage in the war from which Seyss-Inquart brought home a wound which will cause him to walk with a slight limp to the end of his life. Incidentally, both were myopic, and used spectacles of the horn-rimmed variety. Schuschnigg’s trust in him was due above all to the fact that Seyss-Inquart still enjoyed the reputation—which he had once deserved—of being a devout Catholic; he was not only a member of but a public speaker for the powerful “Catholic Action”. Schuschnigg had surrounded himself by its members, and gave his confidence to all of them.

On the Saturday night when Schuschnigg returned from Berchtesgaden I met Father Muckermann, a Bavarian Jesuit who had had to flee Germany for his stout opposition to the anti-Catholic crusade of the Nazis, whom he hated several degrees more than he hated the Reds, which was saying something. A fine popular speaker, unusually handsome, with a magnificent silvery mane like an old-school actor, Father Muckermann had proved such a thorn in the flesh of the Third Reich in Rome, where he went after his flight from Germany, that Goering on one of his visits had insisted that Mussolini must get the Vatican to send him out of Italy. At that time the Duce still stood behind Austria, and with his approval the Vatican transferred Muckermann to—Vienna, where he became the rallying-point for devout Catholic workers in the opposition to the Nazis.

“Tell me, Father,” I asked him, “do you believe that Schuschnigg can possibly hand over the police to Seyss-Inquart?”

"No, my son," he said, "in my view it is quite impossible. Seyss-Inquart at one time did manage to persuade Schuschnigg that a man could be both a good Catholic and a Nazi. But Schuschnigg has long found out that mistake." (Fortunately the worthy Father proved to have a better nose for his own affairs than for Schuschnigg's, for two nights before the rape of Austria he got away safely to Switzerland.)

Schuschnigg had decided by Monday that while calming the population at home, it was necessary to let all the dangers of the situation be known abroad, and instructed his Press Department to that effect. But Guido Schmidt double-crossed him by telling the head of the Press Bureau that on no account must the foreign Press learn anything of the real situation.

On the Monday, I learned from the Revolutionary Socialists and the Communists that despite the long-existing prohibition of strikes in Fascist Austria, a series of short protest strikes against Berchtesgaden had taken place in a number of Vienna factories with the slogan: "We won't let ourselves be sold to Hitler". How true was the instinct of the simple working-man despite all the efforts of the Government propaganda machine, and what helpless sheep the middle classes looked as they scurried here and there in search of a lead, trying to believe that all was well! Colonel Walter Adam, Commissar for Propaganda and head of the Press Bureau, called a number of Anglo-Saxon correspondents to a confidential Press conference on, I think, Wednesday. A former General Staff officer, good-looking, with an extremely pleasant and persuasive voice which he had often used with good effect to spread propaganda over the radio, Colonel Adam talked to us—on the instruction of Guido Schmidt—as old friends of his country. He made it quite clear that he was not threatening or trying to over-persuade us against our better judgment. But he did appeal to us, for the sake of the little country where most of us had lived so long and which he knew we all loved like a second Fatherland and wanted to help, to do our best to calm foreign opinion. Our alarming reports, he said, were frightening away foreign tourists who actually believed that there was a danger of Austria "going Nazi" and of an invasion from Germany! Some of us had even mentioned that a run on the banks, was starting, capital being sent out of the country and that there were signs of a panic on the Bourse. Austria, he said, was fundamentally unchanged. There were no signs of any rising or of dangerous political excitement. As we all knew, there

were always difficulties between the Nazis and the Government, which in recent months had been growing more acute. Surely the world should welcome rather than distrust an agreement between Herr Hitler and Dr. Schuschnigg which was calculated to end all this trouble. Of course, some of the terms of it—and he was not at liberty to reveal any of these to us—were onerous for Austria, but there was every hope that things would work out all right. Then, with a gently reproachful glance in my direction, he said: "One gentleman here cabled abroad to his paper a story that there had been strikes against the Berchtesgaden Agreement. I would like to ask him not to alarm foreign opinion by exaggerating such little minor economic disputes, which, of course, have nothing whatever to do with politics."

Sympathetic as I and nearly everyone else present was to the Colonel's appeal to write nothing we could avoid which might increase the difficulties of his country, this was too much.

"I think you mean me, Herr Oberst," I said. "Please allow me to say that if you were really told that these strikes were unpolitical, and if you think that it is a danger to Austria that foreign countries should know that Austrian workers are outraged by the Berchtesgaden Agreement and ready to risk imprisonment by striking to protest against being 'sold to Hitler', then you are misinformed and altogether fail to see the situation as it is. You should not reproach, but thank me for letting the outside world know that Austrian workers are demonstrating for Austria's freedom."

The Colonel shrugged his shoulders.

Then, in an undertone, I asked him: "Tell me frankly, Herr Oberst—how long do you yourself expect Austria to retain her independence?"

Adam looked graver than ever. "Honestly," he said, "I think we can count on another six months. Beyond that I would not like to say anything."

Within six weeks a friend of mine saw Colonel Adam with Count Hoyos, the President of the "Fascist" Chamber, wearing an apron and serving their food to the scum of the Vienna streets, their guards in storm-troopers' uniforms, in one of their improvised prisons, and afterwards washing dishes from dawn to dusk under the jeers and imprecations of his inhuman tormentors. As a variation, Adam, Hoyos and other aristocrats were employed in painting swastikas in the prison courtyard for long weary hours on the wind-screens of motor-cars stolen from the

Jews. When these had dried, the prisoners had to start on the first one and wash the swastikas off again. A fortnight later the hell of Dachau had swallowed him up, Adam and his friends.

British Tories who are inclined to be complacent about the rape of Austria, and even to contemplate with equanimity a rape of their own country one day by Fascist gangs, might pause awhile and reflect on the fate of their fellows in Austria. Except for the Jews, the aristocracy which remained loyal to the old ruling House met with perhaps the worst treatment of any class from Hitler, Bürckel and Globocnik; there was not even the brief attempt to flatter and cajole them which the Reds "enjoyed".

They might meditate on the lot of the seventy-three-year-old Prince Karl Fürstenberg, placed with twenty-eight others in a cell in the Rossauerlande prison intended for six, so full that the Prince had to take his turn with "Red" bricklayers and dockers in sitting on the floor. The only sanitary convenience consisted in a large bucket placed in the middle of the floor and emptied once in twenty-four hours. Nobody yet knows for certain what has happened to Prince Max of Hohenberg and his brother Prince Ernst, sons of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, who would have become Emperor of Austria, Apostolic King of Hungary and a good many more things of that kind had he not married a mere Countess and then been assassinated with her at Sarajevo in 1914. That these brothers were both arrested and lodged in the Rossauerlande prison, and later deported with a big batch of concentration-camp prisoners to Germany is known. Whether their fate is really Dachau, as has been reported, or some less notorious prison is not certain. The list could—and in the course of months and years, as news trickles through the barbed wire and cell windows, doubtless will—be indefinitely prolonged.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE LAST FOUR WEEKS

SCHUSCHNIGG HAD BEEN GIVEN THREE DAYS—SUNDAY, MONDAY and Tuesday—to bring Miklas to comply with the remaining eight points of Hitler's ultimatum. The immediate reactions of Miklas on the Sunday were to refuse point-blank to violate the Constitution by yielding to the German threats. On Monday, therefore, the German Reichswehr Ministry politely intimated to the Austrian Ministry of War that they were just starting "manœuvres" on the Austrian frontier and that they would go on for some days. Lest foreign opinion might learn of Austria's peril, the authorities hastened to tell us that this was quite normal—nothing was ever really serious in Austria so long as you did not admit it. Miklas, who bitterly reproached Schuschnigg for yielding at all, suggested that perhaps even now Schuschnigg's promises might be made null and void if he, Miklas, flatly refused the remaining eight points. They could then prepare for resistance and see whether the civilised world would really stand by and watch the rape of Austria. On Tuesday, however, the President began to weaken. Schuschnigg was quite incapable of going back on what he considered his pledged word, despite the pressure under which it was extorted. Nor was he prepared for the shedding of blood. He made Miklas see what the German announcement about "manœuvres" really meant, and that Hitler would stop at nothing if opposed.

After a stormy all-night sitting, the final surrender was made by the Cabinet Council at 2 a.m. on Wednesday morning. The Cabinet was reconstructed in order to give full control of police and gendarmerie to the Nazi Seyss-Inquart as Minister of Security, while all control over foreign policy passed out of the hands of Schuschnigg into those of Guido Schmidt. On Tuesday afternoon Schuschnigg had made a new telephonic appeal to Mussolini. The Duce could not be found. He was away ski-ing while Vienna burned. In Budapest, Schuschnigg's friend, Premier Daranyi, was deaf to all enquiries; the prospect of being allowed to share



in the partition of Czechoslovakia which was expected to follow within a few days of the annexation of Austria was more tempting than that of incurring Germany's enmity by taking part in a firm stand for self-defence of the small Danubian States. So Seyss-Inquart took the oath to keep Austria secure at home and Guido Schmidt to safeguard her interests abroad. Immediately I telephoned through a story that Austria's independence was at an end.

Schuschnigg's political friends tried next day to persuade me that there was still hope. Seyss-Inquart had offered to give a written guarantee to put down Nazi terrorism as sternly as his predecessor, the Police President of Vienna, Dr. Skubl, who had been Secretary of State for Security under Schuschnigg as Minister. Schuschnigg had succeeded in retaining Skubl in a new post of "Inspector for Security", so that he would still be able to check Nazi conspiracies, they said. (On the night of Schuschnigg's downfall, I heard Skubl's name announced, amidst the boos of the assembled Nazis, from the balcony of the Chancellery to a post in Seyss-Inquart's Nazi Cabinet.) Hitler's promise concerning the speech he was to make to the Reichstag on Sunday was absolutely binding. He had tied himself to make full personal recognition of Austria's independence, to declare that the Fatherland Front was recognised by him as the only permissible political movement in Austria, and that when they were allowed in it the Nazis must behave themselves and try neither to split it nor to form a separate Party within its ranks. Further, he had promised to confirm the inviolability of the present Constitution. It was only some days later that Schuschnigg's friends abandoned these pitiful efforts at an optimism which they never really felt. The sudden and secret arrival of Signor Salata, the former Italian Minister in Vienna, who had been one of the architects of Austria's subjugation to Italy's policy in return for her protection against Germany, and of the Rome Protocols, caused a momentary flicker of hope. This faded when it was learned that the Duce had disowned Salata to Hitler and had assured him that Salata was in Vienna in a purely private capacity. Nor, said Schuschnigg's friends, did Salata's counsel prove to have any value. Like the British and French Ministers, he advised Schuschnigg to fulfil every demand made on him and play for time, as very soon an Anglo-Italian Agreement would leave Mussolini free to take up the defence of Austria again and defeat Hitler's plans. On Monday night, the last but

one of Austria's real independence, Guido Schmidt had chosen to give a banquet in the glittering Imperial Hall of the Hofburg, the former Palace of the Habsburgs, to 200 guests, who included, of course, the whole diplomatic corps.

"For me it was a ghastly feast", an old Austrian aristocrat told me the following morning. "The colours of independent Austria draped the hall, but behind every Austrian guest was the shadow of the Swastika. To-day we are all virtually subjects of Hitler, and it is from Berlin and Berchtesgaden that our foreign policy and the actions of our police will be dictated."

The announcement of the Cabinet changes put an end to the work of the official optimists. More and more details of what had been lost began to leak out. The 30,000 men of the Austrian Legion—mostly terrorists and criminals—were to be allowed back to reap their vengeance on loyal citizens. The Austrian Episcopate was to get rid of all German *émigré* priests from Austria. The Austrian Press was in future to delete all news of the persecution of Catholics in Germany. Something closely resembling the Nuremberg laws against the Jews would have to be introduced before long. Austria had definitely promised that she would never tolerate a Habsburg Restoration. Von Ribbentrop had also insisted on Austria following Germany's own policy of hostility towards Czechoslovakia. But as to this, Schuschnigg had been adamant, pointing out that such a policy meant economic suicide for Austria. On all vital questions, it was slowly realised, Schuschnigg had yielded. Consternation spread amongst all patriotic Austrians, who began to declare that the Chancellor had rendered illusory the whole of their four years' sacrifices and struggles and let them in for terrible Nazi vengeance. . . .

Something had happened to the life of the streets in Vienna. From my office window I could see that the Graben, instead of being filled with cheerful crowds engaged in that leisurely saunter which is the Viennese equivalent for hurrying about one's business, showed on all sides little groups with newspapers in their hands, reading incredulously the names of the new Ministers. In tram and bus one caught always the same fragments of conversation. . . . "Seyss-Inquart", ". . . utterly impossible", ". . . really the end". And always, again and again, "Seyss-Inquart".

Colonel Adam had gone on the air on Tuesday evening during the Cabinet Council with a speech which endeavoured to restore some confidence while maintaining a cautious note of warning

that changes were coming. "There is no question of splitting the Fatherland Front", he had said, "but those who formerly held aloof will now be able to join freely. Be patient, calm your anxieties and wait for some important announcements." When these took the shape of the devastating changes in the Cabinet the only effect which Adam's speech had was to increase the general distrust of anything the Government tried to do in the way of calming the public. Now the Nazis were completely jubilant, and there was no more talk of a "second betrayal" by Hitler. They knew that the game was in their own hands. Yet there were no demonstrations. It was one more proof that Nazism in Austria was not a popular movement, but a perfectly disciplined, militaristic and conspiratorial organisation.

"Why don't you demonstrate your happiness and celebrate your triumph?" I asked some of my Nazi acquaintances. "You have done so before with a mere fraction of your present excuse." "Orders from above", was the reply. "We are to hold our hands until the Führer has spoken on Sunday." At midnight on Wednesday came the amnesty, and over 2000 political prisoners and terrorists were released. Tavs of the Tavs Plan was among them, and left Austria (later to return and assist the last stages of the plot). So Schuschnigg had given that card—the trial of Tavs with its incontestable proofs of Hitler's duplicity—out of his hand also.

Almost with every hour the storm-signs thickened. Within eighteen hours of his appointment as Minister for Austria's security, Seyss-Inquart had left for Berlin to get fresh instructions from Hitler. The inspired Press said (what a hope!) that he had gone to arrange with Himmler for the severance of all connections between Germany and the Austrian Nazi conspirators! Hitler was angered to find Schuschnigg still fighting a rearguard action. The Chancellor had fulfilled the amnesty terms—and gone beyond them. Simultaneously with the Nazis, he released all their worst enemies, the imprisoned Left "Illegals"—a merciful action which saved the lives of a few of them, who promptly fled the country, although most stayed and were re-arrested by the Gestapo a few weeks later. In the basement of my house in the Habsburgergasse there were signs of unrest among the Sturmkorps—Dr. Schuschnigg's pet body created to repay Nazi interrupters and rioters at meetings in their own coin. "Schuschnigg has betrayed us to Hitler", was the cry. Schuschnigg came to talk to them at their headquarters, was

received with stormy cries, listened to with respect and left amidst cheers. The same thing happened at Fatherland Front headquarters, Am Hof, except that the older Front leaders were less easily persuaded than the "S.-K." boys.

My telephone bell, my front-door bell in the office and at home during that week of suspense seemed never to be still. People with news, people wanting news, Jews asking if there were time to pack before the Nazis stormed in, old friends from the underground Parties released after months of prison and concentration camp coming in to ask if Schuschnigg was mad in that he continued to play the game of parading the evidence of support obtained mechanically from the Fascist trades union which the workers detested, while refusing to see the real workers' leaders, the *Illegalen*, Monarchists with wild dreams of a dash for the throne by Otto, Nazi agents with mysterious hints of the brewing upheaval—life was a pandemonium which was only to be eclipsed by the scenes I lived through when the full Nazi reign of terror broke after March 11th.

"Why does not Schuschnigg speak to us?" his followers complained to me bitterly. "Let him tell us the truth—or does he think we cannot stand it? If there is really to be no more resistance, many of us must flee the country; he owes it to us to give us timely warning. If there is no fear of a German invasion, let him give us a rallying cry, and we can settle accounts with our own Nazis as quickly as we have often done in the past." To all such pleas, which reached him hourly, Schuschnigg was deaf, saying that he had promised Hitler to keep silent until after the latter's speech in the Reichstag on Sunday.

"That speech!" one of Schuschnigg's fellow-workers said to me bitterly. "Schuschnigg has sold his country for worthless assurances to come from Hitler next Sunday—a mess of pottage. And—mark my words—when the speech is made, not even the pottage will be forthcoming!" On Thursday the leaders of the single trades union—some of them secretly Socialists and Communists, others Schuschnigg's supporters and Fascists—met and passed a resolution declaring their determination to fight for Austria's independence. "The Austrian workers are for peace, but not for peace at any price", it ran. Brave words, but these men were still not the real leaders of the workers, and Schuschnigg knew it. Those leaders, many of them just released from prison, tried hard to get into touch with the harassed Chancellor. An endeavour, they felt, had to be made to

persuade the masses to forget February 1934 and the ensuing four years' persecution for Socialist opinion. If any, these were the men who could do it. The sands were fast running out, but still Schuschnigg could not find his way to the real workers' leaders. For these men were the sworn enemies of Fascism and of authoritarianism. It was at the behest of Mussolini that Dollfuss had destroyed their powers. If he saw them now, the Chancellor said privately, it would bolt the door to all hopes of Italian Fascist support. It might give Hitler the excuse to invade Austria with the cry of "Bolshevism!" and make of it a second Spain.

Seyss-Inquart came back from Berlin with the new orders. The Nazis were to keep quiet in Vienna, where they were hopelessly weak, until after Hitler's speech, but in the provinces they were to start demonstrations and disorders at one centre after another, until the whole country should be aflame and then Vienna would have to fall with or without invasion, the Nazi chief conspirators were told. In fact the Tavs Plan—which was also the old Kollerschlag Plan of July 1934—was to be put into force.

Sunday came at last, with the decisive speech of Hitler. By arrangement with Germany it was broadcast by the Ravag; in return, the complementary speech which Schuschnigg was to deliver on Tuesday would be broadcast in Germany. During the interminable hours of that speech, while Hitler was delivering himself, in his ill-educated variation of the Austrian accent, of the endless boastful array of "*Dausend Donnen*" (for "*Tausend Tonnen*") that his supreme genius had caused to be added to German production—chiefly of materials for war—I went out for half an hour to get a picture of the streets.

Vienna was a city of the dead. I saw exactly ten people in the busy Graben and Kärntnerstrasse—and these were standing taut beneath a loud-speaker. The Nazis listened to hear that they had secured the open instead of the concealed backing of the Führer at last, and were not disappointed. The Austrian patriots listened for the fulfilment of Hitler's "glittering word of honour"—in vain. Not one word of Austria's independence, not one word of the Constitution, not one word of advice to the Austrian Nazis to behave well, not one word of the promised compensation for all that had been sacrificed. On the contrary, the speech even contained sentences which were clearly preparing the way for the legend which was subsequently

adopted, that there was a danger of civil war in Austria. (That legend, after completion of the rape, was to be cynically advanced as a justification for the German invasion.) Not a word of the promised confirmation of the German recognition of Austrian independence contained in the July 1936 Agreement was there, but there were several sentences emphasising the onerous conditions which Hitler had forced on Austria at that time. Then came an open threat and a barely veiled repetition of the accusation to Schuschnigg at Berchtesgaden that he was a "torturer of the German people".

Hitler declared that there were on Germany's frontiers two States, including in their populations 10,000,000 Germans, who he declared, had "formed part of a German State" up to 1866. There was no question that this referred to Austria and Czechoslovakia. It was deliberately misleading, because these countries had never formed part of the Reich of Prussia-Germany which was founded in 1871, but had been the centre of the Holy Roman Empire, of which Prussia and other German States were something like tributary members. The Reichskanzler declared that these 10,000,000 Germans were not to be deprived of political rights and denied "the general right of racial self-determination simply because they are Germans". It was, he said, "intolerable for a self-conscious world-Power to know that at its side are co-racials who are subjected to continuous suffering because of their sympathy and unity with the whole German race and its ideology". "Unnecessary torture", he declaimed, of national minorities must not be. These insinuations were well understood by the Nazis in Austria as a promise of armed German intervention unless they were enabled to triumph without it in their aim of dominating the remaining seventy-odd per cent. of the Austrian people. Hitler invented a "German minority" in Austria based on his regular thesis that those Germans who did not accept his fanatic ideology were not Germans at all, but "race traitors", and then characterised the hostility of the great majority of Austrians to the Nazis' dictatorial aspirations as "minority persecution". His propaganda later pursued similar tactics over Czechoslovakia.

The speech had hardly ended before the advance guard of the Nazi revolution, assured now of the backing of the Dictator of 66,000,000 Germans, was on the streets. The illegal and un-uniformed storm-troopers and the S.S. guards were turned out. Up to the windows of my flat rose for the first time that



insane, threatening, rhythmic howling which was to echo on day after day until I left Austria with the ugly sound still ringing in my ears :

“Sieg Heil! *Sieg Heil!* SIEG HEIL! Heil Hitler! *Heil Hitler!* HEIL HITLER!”

I took a taxi to the obvious danger-point—the German Legation. As I drew near I could hear it again: “Sieg Heil! *Sieg Heil!* SIEG HEIL!” As one first caught it in the distance it was just a rhythmic throb, like the beating of a feverish pulse, which as one approached seemed to change into the inarticulate but disciplined cawing of some militarised rookery—“A-a-a-ah—AAAH! A-a-a-ah—AAH—A-a-a-ah—AAH!”, and finally into audible words. The dam of four years had been pierced by the Hitler speech, and the Brown flood was beginning to trickle into the streets of Vienna. It was only a trickle of storm-troopers and S.S. guards in plain clothes that I saw that night, shouting and singing the Horst Wessel song, but it was enough to send nervous citizens scurrying home in all directions from the cafés where they had been listening to Hitler’s speech.

On the Karlsplatz was a young man directing the illegal formations in stentorian tones: “Storm-troopers on the right—S.S. Guards on the left”, wearing a surprisingly shabby raincoat over an incongruously smart suit. Next day I received by a roundabout route a message from a member of the French Legation staff who had been watching the demonstration from a window of the Legation. He had recognised quite unmistakably this young man as one of the attachés of the German Legation—in charge of the Austrian revolutionary Nazis! This seemed to me a supremely significant little incident, but few people seemed to appreciate its importance. The French Legation—and one other—certainly did.

Police were rushed hither and thither in their special “alarm charabancs”—why, it was not quite clear, for they no longer made any effort to suppress the illegal demonstrations. Since Wednesday morning they had had a new master, and felt that they were soon to have others, and must trim their sails. Seyss-Inquart’s interviews in Berlin had included several long conferences with Himmler, notorious chief of the dreaded German Gestapo. Immediately after his return, Seyss-Inquart handed over to two Gestapo agents—agents of a foreign Power—full lists of every supporter of the democratic Left who had ever been arrested under the Clerico-Fascist dictatorship, even if only by



mistake or for a few hours. That told its own story. From Graz, Linz, Innsbruck and other provincial centres came reports that the Nazis were completely out of hand.

Schuschnigg was no quitter. Next evening, Monday, he replied to Sunday's illegal demonstrations with a general prohibition of political meetings, and addressed sharp reproaches to Seyss-Inquart because the released Dr. Rintelen and Captain Leopold, against whom all charges had been dropped under the amnesty, had declined to fulfil their solemn engagements to go to Germany, and were making themselves the centre of Nazi demonstrations in Graz and Vienna.

Seyss-Inquart took over his Austrian police, addressing them as "Germans". On Monday at noon he went on the air, at Schuschnigg's urgent demand that he should fulfil his promise of maintaining order, and delivered a speech which was supposed to calm the Nazis, some of whom I watched demonstrating outside the University, while I listened to his broadcast. He addressed his hearers as "Austrian and German *Volksgenossen*", thus for the first time publicly combining his assumed rôle of Austrian patriot with his real character as advocate of German Nazism. He spoke in a pleasant voice, free from all "Leader" ranting, and asked the Nazis, after "three days of natural jubilation", to get down to serious "work". Then, after the "first steps" had been taken, he would summon them again to "public rejoicing". He told his followers that they must not abuse the sacred symbol of the Third Reich, the Swastika, and its sacred anthem, the Horst Wessel song, for political demonstrations. . . . A week later in Graz I was to see Seyss-Inquart himself forming the centre of a flagrant instance of such abuse.

Long before Hitler spoke on Sunday, I had learned from friends of Schuschnigg how firmly he was clinging to the frail hope that the promises he had received in Berchtesgaden would be kept. It is part of the tantalus torments of all foreign correspondents that the best stories they ever secure are usually those that they are unable, for one reason or another, to get into print. Sometimes the reason is that the facts in them do not suit the "policy" of the paper. Frequently it is that the correspondent has learned them in strict confidence. It was in strict confidence that I was told that Schuschnigg had decided if, as everyone told him would be the case, Hitler cheated him over the Reichstag speech, he would hit back in his own speech on Tuesday by underlining the difference between the deplorable conditions of shortage which Hitler's

regime had brought about in Germany and the normal conditions of plenty which existed in Austria, for the benefit of the German listeners to whom his speech had to be relayed. And in even stricter confidence I was told that Schuschnigg was playing with the idea, if it should become clear that Hitler was determined not to stop at even the rape of Austria, of granting at last, but with unexpected suddenness, the five-year-old demand of the Nazis that a plebiscite should be held on the question of the absorption of Austria by Germany. But of this it was absolutely essential that I should not breathe a word, since Schuschnigg had decided that if the plebiscite was held, it should be done in so simple a form and at such short notice that all previous existing objections to this course connected with the danger of interference from the Reich would be destroyed.

Three days before the date which would be fixed for their answer, the Austrian people would be asked the very simple question: "Are you in favour of the independence of Austria or not?" Before the huge propagandist and terrorist machinery of the Third Reich, with its vast resources, its money and its skill in "whispering" terror propaganda could be brought into play, the question would be put and the answer recorded. Schuschnigg knew that it was risking all on a desperate last throw, but he was utterly confident of victory if an unfettered answer could be given, and was ready to take all the consequences in the event of its proving unfavourable.

Here was a story indeed—an exclusive, totally unexpected world sensation. I hope that even if I had not learned of it with a most urgent request not to breathe a word of it, I should have had the intelligence to keep silent, and to see that premature revelation might destroy the last hope of holding off the Brown terror from this sunny little country to which during twelve years I owed so many happy hours amidst a considerable proportion of very sad ones. Now that I know something of all the then-unimaginable horrors that followed on the Nazi triumph—the thousands of suicides of entirely unoffending citizens, the ruthless arrests of thousands without even a pretence at a charge, in order to extort from them their last penny and drive them from the country, the brutal tortures, the shameful humiliations, the murders, the ruined homes—I know that if by some indiscretion I had made myself in the least degree responsible for these horrors, I should long ago have been driven to end my own life. But on the night when I first had this State secret to myself, my

journalistic heart felt a little sore as I concluded a comparatively ordinary story with the usual formula to the telephonist at the other end "And that's the lot". My secret I had to keep close for another three weeks.

On Thursday night, despite my knowledge that Schuschnigg intended to hit back in his speech, and despite the almost visible tension in the air, I took my seat in the Press gallery of Parliament without enthusiasm. Since 1933 this building had been for me a mausoleum without even a corpse, a hypocritical sham. Where once the men and women whom Austrian people had chosen to speak in their name—Clericals, Reds, Nationalists, peasants, capitalists, proletarians—had fought, each for his own supporters, in the light of day and secured what he could for them in the natural adjustment of differences between members of the same community, it had long been only possible to hear pompous nominees of the self-proclaimed leaders of a fat and puffy bourgeoisie pouring forth unctuous phrases with which they bored even one another from the outset. And anyway Schuschnigg was no orator—he often lacked the ability to get his personal sincerity across the footlights. And had not his Press Bureau been pouring out ridiculous platitudes to the foreign Press for days which were an insult to the meanest intelligence? Well, it was all in the day's work. I had to "get the picture", listen to Schuschnigg's probably mechanical phrases, the phrases common to all dictators, and do a hellish long story on them, for we in Austria were now the centre of world interest, and then perhaps be able to get away to some of the work which really counted—the work behind the scenes.

Wrong! For once the work that counted was the work in the open that everyone could see—the work of recording the greatest speech that Austria's Chancellor had yet made—the speech of a man whose personal courage, whose glowing sense of crusading, of being the champion of right against outrageous oppression, was to carry him right out of himself and overcome all his painful self-restraints.

"Austria shall remain free, and for this we will fight to the death!" Words are cheap enough to dictators, whose audiences are picked and to interrupt whom is a crime. Similar high-sounding phrases I had heard from the dealers in the false coinage of speech in many countries. But as Schuschnigg spoke, I realised that I was up against something different—a man of

literally dauntless courage, prepared for martyrdom, imbued with a burning sense of injustice. This was spoken history.

For the thousandth time I thanked my stars that I had been called to this trade of journalism with all its hardships, cruel disappointments, the frequent waste of a man's best and exaltation of his worst work, its nerve-strain, personal jealousies, thanklessness, nepotism and the thousand and one obstacles which it presents to getting the truth about the things which are really vital across to those who will understand them, but which at least enabled, and even obliged one to be at the centre of such historic happenings as this.

Among the diplomats sat von Papen, glum and disapproving, as he heard the man he had betrayed and had thought finished and done with, rising to heights of which no one had thought him capable. I had seen Papen arrive at the entrance to Parliament amidst the wild shouts of the Chancellor's slogan "Oesterreich! Oesterreich!"—"Austria! Austria!"—from the crowds who recognised and hated him. And I had seen Schuschnigg drive through the serried ranks of thousands of wildly cheering Fatherland Front members on the Ring—a demonstration which to me meant nothing, because I knew how, on the Nazi model, enthusiasm had been artificially whipped up and attendance ensured through fear of absence being noted. (The Fascist dictatorships are all the same—fearing and distrusting the masses, they demand mass.)

But now, as Schuschnigg moved up to the tribune to begin his address, there broke loose a storm of enthusiasm which no dictatorship could extract by force. These people clung to Schuschnigg and believed in Schuschnigg—sad for him only that they did not include one genuine representative of the great toiling masses of the country who were confronted by the same peril of the Brown Beast as that which roused these leaders of the bourgeoisie to a nervous frenzy. But between those, the *Proletarier*, and the Jesuit scholar stood still the shadow of Stella Matutina on his side, and on theirs (as my washerwoman friend put it) the dangling bodies of Georg Weissel, Koloman Wallisch and the boy Gerl.

The stage had been well set with banks of tulips in the Austrian colours of red-white-red, a bust of the murdered Dollfuss facing the Speaker's tribune, the huge "Dollfuss Cross" (the episcopal "crutch" cross) behind Schuschnigg and clever floodlighting. But there was no stage management about the great roar which

went up as the Chancellor, in the grey uniform of Dollfuss' Fatherland Front, tried to open his mouth in speech.

"Schuschnigg! Schuschnigg! Schuschnigg!" they shouted tirelessly, and the Chancellor could not silence them. At last, after starting in a voice as tired as his eyes, despite his erect bearing and vigorous step, Schuschnigg soon got into his stride. Austria, he declared, was a Christian, German, Federal State. Deliberately he omitted the rest of Dollfuss' oft-repeated and always lifeless formula—"authoritarian and corporative"—a first concession to the workers, who bitterly hated these two Fascist terms. The almost equally hated word *Christlich*—which in practice meant not just "Christian", but "priest-controlled", the devout Schuschnigg could not drop, even to save himself in this last extremity. But that the workers would understand. Yet even at this late hour Schuschnigg had to toe the line to the old Heimwehr lie of "Austro-Bolshevists", and lash out at "International Communism". That the workers certainly would not appreciate. Cleverly, saying that he did not want to reopen old wounds, Schuschnigg recalled the officially alleged last words of the dying Dollfuss, thus quietly reminding his hearers in Germany, as in Austria, that it was the Nazis who had murdered his predecessor. He put into Hitler's mouth the guarantees so solemnly promised at Berchtesgaden which the Führer had so cynically failed to give, saying: "We have given abundant proofs of goodwill. From the German side the reassurances are repeated [they should have been, but were not] that measures will be taken to prevent any interference in Austria's internal affairs. It has been agreed that the illegal Nazis in Austria cannot expect any support from abroad or tolerance by my Government. We have gone to the very limit of concessions, where we must call a halt and say, 'Thus far, but no farther'. This we have done because of our trust in the word of the successful Leader of the German Reich." It was his only personal characterisation of Hitler, and the icy tribute "successful" was very noticeable.

Now Schuschnigg proceeded to detail the progress made in Austria and the stability of her household. He made no direct reference to Germany in this part of his speech, but no one could miss the contrast between this solid record of national security built up steadily from the utter ruin of the 1918 *débâcle* and the high-sounding but deceptive "*Dausend Donnen*" with which the Führer had belaboured the ether for a solid hour four days

before. Certainly the Führer, who so rigorously kept all criticism from the ears of Germans, did not miss it. Schuschnigg suggested that he did not wish to bore his hearers with arrays of figures, which, as they knew, could always be arranged to suit the purpose of the speaker. But he reminded them how twenty years before this little country of 6,500,000 had been left as the rump of the great Monarchy of the Habsburgs from which others had carved off all the best pieces. The break-up of the Monarchy had destroyed her banking system and her railways. High tariff walls sprang up to cut off her industrial undertakings from supply sources and markets. The young and vigorous national States around her made it their first aim to become independent of the old Austrian supplier. A horde of officers and officials left unemployed by the break-up of the Monarchy streamed into the country, penniless. Coal supplies failed. Vienna was left starving from the aftermath of blockade and could not even run her tramway system. The country was torn with the bitterness of political conflict.

And now, said Schuschnigg, what had Austria really achieved in these twenty years? She had built up from all this wreckage an entirely new State. He proceeded to detail in loud and confident tones all those things where Austria had succeeded and the Brown Reich of the Nazis had failed—so completely that it was now reaching out greedy hands towards Austria's comparative prosperity, her iron ores, her cellulose for explosives. Austria had twice fully stabilised her currency—first after the inflation of 1922, and secondly after the disaster of the collapse of the Credit-Anstalt. Her currency was sound, on a gold basis; she paid all her debts. What she wanted she could import and pay for in gold and gold currency: she was not obliged to flounder about in a sea of barter arrangements. She had built up her agriculture, milk and sugar production to bring prosperity to the State. She had modernised, and was still improving, her roads and railways, and had harnessed the water-power of her mountain lakes and torrents. Above all, the character of her people had aided the beauty of her scenery to enable her to create out of nothing a great tourist industry which brought in big revenues. She had entirely eliminated the heavy adverse balance of trade of the early years, and her budget balanced without the need of resorting to dangerous currency experiments or economic miracles, performed at the cost of foreign creditors, the end of which no one could foresee. Thanks to the honesty



and regularity with which she was meeting service and amortisation of her loans, said Schuschnigg, Austria could buy freely any quantity of raw materials she needed in the markets of the world. Well did his hearers know the contrast which he implied, and applauded him wildly. For me the effect of these telling facts was not strengthened by the sentimental conclusion. "I trust in the Lord God, who will not desert our country. He helps only those who are determined to concentrate for the cause all their strength, all their will-power. And because we are so determined, our final victory is beyond question. 'Until death, Red-White-Red!' *Oesterreich!*"

He ended amidst the frenzied applause of the whole House, which was re-echoed from the streets. Schuschnigg had found the sacred fire at last—every word rang with the sincerity of his personal convictions. For that reason, the peroration was also inevitable for him. The voice of Stella Matutina had to break through. As I forced my way back through the cheering crowds of the Fatherland Front supporters paraded on the Ring, I could not avoid the feeling that Schuschnigg might well have exchanged half this crowd of frenzied and frightened, largely Catholic, small bourgeoisie who clung desperately to him as their last hope, for just one hundred men behind whom stood the solid rock of the Viennese workers. His trust in God sounded well to his hearers, but Hitler had also had God very noticeably in his mouth on Sunday. What force would have been behind that peroration if only Schuschnigg had been able to conclude:

"I trust not only in God, my fellow-Catholics, the other representatives of the patriotic bourgeoisie and the peasantry. To-day, thank God, I can trust also in that great movement comprising forty-two per cent. of our population formerly known as the Social-Democratic Party, which after February 1934 split into several underground Left organisations. Its leaders have to-day assured me that the whole Austrian working-class down to the last proletarian will fight at our side to preserve the full liberties of democracy which I have to-day restored to the people of Austria."

If only—"If only", a certain outspoken and impatient member of the London diplomatic corps is supposed to have said recently to Lord Halifax when the Foreign Secretary had piously murmured something about "If only Hitler would back his will to peace with deeds"—"If only your aunt had \*\*\*\*\*, she would be your uncle".



## CHAPTER XXII

### THE PROVINCES LOST

WHILE SCHUSCHNIGG WAS RALLYING HIS FORCES IN VIENNA, Seyss-Inquart, through his Nazi *Volkspolitische Referenten* in the Fatherland Front, was undermining the defences in the provinces. Schuschnigg's speech had been broadcast from every Rathaus in the country. At Graz 20,000 Nazis invaded the square outside the Rathaus an hour before the Fatherland Front parade was announced, and ordered the Burgomaster to haul down the Austrian flag and hoist that of the Swastika. They tore the banner of their country to shreds and rendered Schuschnigg's speech inaudible with the organised shouting of the usual slogans and the howling of the Horst Wessel song. The police had been ordered by the new master, Seyss-Inquart, to interfere with nothing short of physical violence. That the Nazis had considerable backing in Graz everybody knew. But it seemed impossible that they could be as strong as they suddenly showed themselves. It was impossible. I made careful inquiries next day in other provincial capitals, and discovered that the explanation of the mystery lay in the "traveling circus". Innsbruck, my informant, himself an active Nazi, told me had been practically denuded of young members of the Party. Where were they? "The whole S.A. and S.S. of Tyrol", he said, "have been sent to Graz to support there the fight for liberation from Schuschnigg". The same thing, I found, had happened to a slightly lesser degree in Klagenfurt and Salzburg. Graz was to be made the breach in Austria's defences. By Saturday the situation there had grown so serious that infantry, artillery and tanks had to be sent down from Lower Austria. In defiance of the Government prohibition of political open-air demonstrations and the flying of the Swastika banner, the city had become a sea of Swastika red; the Nazis had announced a march of 60,000 (storm-troopers and S.S.) from all parts of Austria for Sunday.

I took the train which in 1931 we had labelled the "Putsch

Express", and arrived in Graz on Sunday to see the new Putsch. All day Government bombers roared overhead. Field-guns were posted very conspicuously to cover all the main roads and railways leading into the city, barbed-wire knife-rests were held in readiness and machine-guns posted in the streets. As always throughout the history of the movement, the Nazis, who have gone from triumph to triumph where concession after concession has been made to them, quailed at a show of force. They called off the march and sent their motor-cycle couriers all round the countryside to hold back the storm-troopers. The Swastika banners were hauled down, but the forbidden Hitler saluting continued. It was a temporary victory for Schuschnigg. But one did not feel inclined to make too much of it when one saw Nazi dispatch-riders, boldly wearing the forbidden Swastika armlets, pull up their machines, jump off and smartly salute the officers of Schuschnigg's army with the forbidden Hitler salute and report "All quiet in the Eggenburg district, sir—march cancelled". There was danger for the future, too, in the slogan they had chosen for the forbidden march, "Against Communist intrigues in the Fatherland Front". So the good old anti-Comintern horse was to be flogged up in Austria, Austrian patriotism labelled Communism, Schuschnigg to be dubbed a *Front Populaire* leader and the Nazis to camouflage themselves as the real Fatherland Front!

In Graz I discovered a lot about the new Nazi tactics. When Nazi dynamism gets into action, its first principle is to bewilder the enemy by constant changing of ground so that he never knows where to strike, and to break his nerve by tireless feint attacks and a never-pausing exploitation of every concession gained to demand fresh ones. Schuschnigg had thrown open the doors of the Fatherland Front to the Nazis on the vital condition that they, like everyone else, must join as individuals. But in Graz the individual Nazis were handing in their application forms to the storm-troop leaders, who were presenting them *en bloc*. A "Working Association of Nazis within the Fatherland Front" was already forming. The illegal storm-troop formations were planning to emerge into daylight with the title of "National Socialist Men", the S.S. guards as "National Socialist Men for Special Employment", and the "Hitler Youth" as "Austrian Nationalist Socialist Youth".

A great procession of 30,000 supporters of Austrian independence marched through the streets of Graz, and the workers'

underground leaders, without even waiting for any agreement with Schuschnigg or the local Fatherland Front authorities, brought along independently a contingent of several thousand Left-organised workers. When the Nazis started trouble, the workers turned on them and chased them ignominiously down the side streets. But Dr. Gorbach, the head of the Fatherland Front in Styria, who had organised the demonstration for Schuschnigg, was withdrawn from his post by Schuschnigg under pressure of Seyss-Inquart.

In a workers' tenement block I had a long talk with a woman underground organiser of the R.S. "The surrender of Gorbach", she said, "means that the Government's writ has practically ceased to run here. Schuschnigg is not defeated—he is yielding without a battle. The Nazis are deliberately forcing matters to the point where he must hand over the city to them or give orders to the troops to fire. The Nazis are well organised, confident and very cleverly managed from above. But they are a considerable minority in the town—no more than twenty thousand out of a population of one hundred and fifty thousand—the great majority of the police and the whole of the troops are dependable and loyal. One salvo would settle the trouble—in Graz—but of course it would give Hitler the excuse for which he is waiting to invade the country. That is why Schuschnigg is going to surrender without battle. He is just caught like a rat in a trap."

Back in Vienna on Monday night, I found that Cardinal Archbishop Dr. Innitzer had issued orders for special prayers that "God would complete the work of peace in Austria". He praised Schuschnigg's "words of liberation, which brought joy to every true Austrian". Within three weeks I saw the placards in the streets of London: "Heil Hitler Cardinal Confers with Führer". Innitzer and many of his Austrian Bishops cruelly stabbed their German co-religionists in the back at the height of the struggle against Nazi anti-Catholic terror. In Austria "the spittle-lickers to the Nazis" was for a time one of the mildest epithets used by Catholics about their own leaders. That of course went by the board when in September 1938 Innitzer learned too late the uselessness of trying to placate the tiger with smiles and recovered his courage.

The aloof and retiring Schuschnigg was bewildered to find himself for the first time in his life a genuinely popular figure, wildly acclaimed wherever he showed himself. Recognised in his box

at the Opera, he was cheered for an unbroken ten minutes by the whole house, while the performance had to wait. On the Sunday when I was in Graz, the music-loving Chancellor attended the last concert of the Vienna Philharmonic that Bruno Walther was ever to conduct in Vienna. He was seldom missing from such evenings, but was never noticed as he sat quietly in a back seat of a small box. On this night some of the audience spotted him during the interval.

The whole house rose and turned towards his box; applauding and shouting frenziedly "Schuschnigg! Schuschnigg! Schuschnigg!" Looking surprised and embarrassed rather than pleased by the demonstration, Schuschnigg waved his hands towards the orchestra, urging the public to applaud them rather than himself. The crowds took no notice until, with a characteristic personal gesture, Schuschnigg clasped his hands in front of him as in prayer, begging for the demonstration to cease. During those few days the shouts of "Heil Schuschnigg!" became for the first time spontaneous in Vienna, and were heard more often than during the whole preceding period that he had held office.

I just had time for a few hours' sleep in Vienna on Monday night, before I was on the train bound for Graz again. Nazi informants there had tipped me the wink on the telephone that Seyss-Inquart was being sent down secretly by Schuschnigg that day, having promised the Chancellor that he would calm the Nazis and restore order. "Actually, it is going to be very different", I was told. "You had better come at once—you will see history made."

Sitting in the first-class carriage of an almost empty, slow train at midday, wondering whether I was not a fool to leave the capital at such a critical moment, I found that, as usual, the Nazis knew all the Government secrets. Accompanied only by two or three friends, Seyss-Inquart came limping along the platform and, with one of the friends, reached my compartment. Now I was going to get a story, and I buried myself in my book. "Let's sit in here", Seyss-Inquart's friend said. I felt the Minister's eye rest on me in reflection for a second and heard him say, "No, not here. I dare say we shall find an empty compartment." Next day I discovered why, when I approached Seyss-Inquart in the hall of my hotel. Before I could give him the name of my paper and ask for an interview, he said:

"But I know you quite well, Mr. Gedye. We only met once, and it was ten years ago, at a dinner-party. But I remember

that we disagreed quite amicably about economic matters and the question of Fascist movements, continuing our discussions in the street from the Stefanskirche to the Schottentor."

At the village of Judenburg ("Jew's Borough"), just before Graz, Seyss-Inquart and his friend got out. Half a dozen storm-troopers on the platform, their eyes glittering with fanatic devotion as their leader approached, clicked their heels and flung up their hands in the anti-Austrian Hitler salute to Austria's Minister of Security, and he drove off with them in a car. My Nazi acquaintance told me to stand by in my hotel and await a call. The Party had forbidden him to give me any information until the last moment, for fear of Government interference with the plans. At ten o'clock I was called to the 'phone. "Get a taxi immediately and drive to the Park Hotel", I was told.

The Park Hotel was undisguisedly Nazi Headquarters, draped inside with Swastika banners, with obvious storm-troop and S.S. leaders in jack-boots and a great bustle of dispatch-riders. Outside in the darkened streets there was a shuffling and whispering of gathering columns. At last my guide sprang up from the table, leaving his goulash untouched and his beer unfinished. "We are off, we are off", he said, grabbing me by the arm and rushing me out of the hotel and along the streets. "To-night Seyss-Inquart is dining with the commander of the Graz Nazis, young Professor Dadieu. You will see that we shall get our Minister to come out in his true colours as a fully fledged Nazi at last. There is no need now for him to continue his half-and-half rôle as a 'moderate'. You are going to see something."

As we hurried along the pavements, the columns of storm-troopers filled the roadway. I had expected a big demonstration of civilians. I found the procession headed by 5000 storm-troopers wearing their forbidden Brown shirts and uniforms. Graz was no longer Austria—it was already a colony of Nazi Germany. As they marched in silence, the windows of Nazi residents opened, long poles were slowly thrust out from them into the street and the Swastika banner unfurled. Standard-bearers amongst the marchers displayed their previously cased colours. Many other windows opened and closed rapidly as the anxious, drawn faces showing white against the blackness of the night vanished from them. To the one this march meant victory—to the neighbour it was the advance guard of unlimited terror. The marchers lit their torches and S.S. detachments,

usurping the rôle of the absent police, issued orders to pedestrians and marshalled them at will. My guide, now boldly displaying a Swastika armlet himself, got me through the guard of S.S. men with linked arms drawn up outside the house where Dadieu occupied a second-floor flat.

Suddenly the head of a column came level with the house. With a disciplined crash as of one man, the jack-boots of the leading company broke into the goose step as the Nazi song, roared from a thousand throats, awoke the echoes of the sleeping street :

*“ Heute gehört uns Deutschland,  
Morgen schon die ganze Welt ! ”*

(“ To-day Germany belongs to us,  
To-morrow we'll own the whole world.”)

The windows of Dadieu's flat flew open and the very tall, good-looking young professor, whom his followers called “ Nazi Lindy ” from his striking resemblance to Colonel Lindbergh, leaned eagerly out, his arm flung up in the full Hitler salute. Slightly withdrawn, pleased satisfaction mingling with some embarrassment on his face, stood Seyss-Inquart, his heavy, horn-rimmed spectacles glittering in the light of the torches.

“ Attention! Eyes Right! HEIL HITLER! ” roared out the stentorian voice of the company commander, and the march past began. For nearly two hours I watched the seemingly endless columns passing. It was only next day that I discovered how, to increase the effect, the companies had been marched by a circular route so that they passed and re-passed the window several times. That explained why, as the evening wore on, I felt that here and there I had spotted a face of someone I knew.

*“ Heil Hitler! Heil Seyss-Inquart! Heil Deutschland! Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer ! ”* The authorised and intoxicating slogans were roared continuously by the goose-stepping boys. It was a terrifying vision of uncontrollable fanaticism. With their taut or twitching facial muscles, their blazing eyes and their dead-white faces fixed on the window, they passed, watching for Seyss-Inquart to violate his promise of pacification given to Schuschnigg and to return their salute. For fully a quarter of an hour he contented himself with raising his hand quite casually in acknowledgement. Then came a picked

company of storm-troopers of magnificent physique, marching with perfect "Guards' " discipline.

"Halt! Right turn!" shouted their commander, a tall, wild-eyed boy, at the utmost nineteen years of age. "Horst Wessel Song!" The full-throated chant, "The flags aloft, the serried ranks closed up", completed the picture of militant reaction on the verge of final triumph. At the words of the refrain,

"Comrades shot down by Red Front and Reaction,  
March on to-day with us within our ranks,"

Seyss-Inquart flung off the mask. Stepping smartly forward to Dadieu's side, the Minister for Austria's security flung up his arm in the forbidden salute given in the name of the man whose cherished dream of the destruction and subjection of Austria to his will was approaching realisation. A deafening roar of triumph rose up from the marchers and the dense crowds of onlookers. Seyss-Inquart had nailed his colours to the mast-head, and for the remainder of the parade he stood rigidly at the salute, greeting the armies of revolt against the Chancellor to whom he owed allegiance. Graz had fallen.

\* \* \* \* \*

The travelling circus moved to Linz. I followed it on Saturday, March 4th, for the Nazis had arranged a huge demonstration for Sunday—this time called "the German Day". Curiously enough, they forecast exactly the same number of participants as were to have taken part a week before in the march through Graz which the Government troops prevented—60,000. The Government cancelled all arrangements made for special trains to bring Nazis to Linz; a great many of these were to have come from across the neighbouring German frontier. Again Schuschnigg entrusted a mission of pacification to Seyss-Inquart. The Nazis were told that their Leader should address their 500 local leaders in Linz and that the proceedings would be relayed over the radio, on condition that there was no attempt to hold the "German Day" in defiance of the Government prohibition.

I first talked to one of the young organisers of the Fatherland Front in Linz. "Things look very bad", he said. "Numerically the Nazis are not strong in the town, although they have a good proportion of the peasants behind them. They are running the 'Popular Front' campaign against us for



all it is worth, which should not be much, considering how we are hated by the illegal workers' organisations. My job won't last many days. We cannot hold out much longer against the pressure from across the frontier. How long it will be before I see the inside of a concentration camp, I don't like to think." It was, in fact, just a fortnight. But when he spoke so calmly of the horrible fate awaiting him, it sounded incredible. Still more incredible had it sounded when, two months before, at a party given by some Viennese bourgeois intellectuals for the Duchess of Atholl, one young girl, looking round the room, had said quietly to me: "I wonder where we shall all be in three months' time—how many murdered, how many fugitives, how many in prison and how many just jobless and starving". I thought that she was just letting gloomy imaginations run away with her, and poured her out another Slivovitz. When I next heard from her, she was a fugitive abroad, our host of that night was hiding in the Alps from what he knew would be instant death if the Nazis caught him, for his brilliant pen had for years served the cause of liberty and democracy, and nearly every other guest was in prison or on the run.

With other foreign correspondents I went to Nazi headquarters, where we were received with suspicion, but eventually obtained facilities to see Seyss-Inquart's arrival at the station and to follow his procession through the streets. The crowds were not remarkably large for a city of the size of Linz, despite all those who had been brought in from the provinces. But the fanatical enthusiasm was just the same as in Graz. On the station I met by accident—separately and at different times—two Linz girls with whom I had struck up a ski-ing friendship in Kitzbühel two years before. Then they were bosom pals, spending their holidays together, sharing one bedroom and inseparable on the practice-fields and mountain tours. As soon as I caught sight of the first, I knew from the glassy stare in her eyes and her tight-lipped mouth what had happened to her. She had gone Nazi.

"Isn't it marvellous," she said, "that he is actually coming? I can't believe that in a few minutes I shall actually see him get out of the train—our hero, the liberator of Linz. Have you seen him? Tell me, what does he look like?"

"Limps, short-sighted, stoops a little and looks like a few

thousand other Austrian solicitors," I replied. "You will be shocked—I sat next to him at dinner once and walked home with him, but never even remembered his existence until he began to get into the news a few months ago."

"You are impossible," she said; "I believe that if you had met the Führer himself before the whole world had acknowledged him, you would have forgotten his existence too."

"I think it extremely probable," I replied. "But tell me, how is your friend Lina getting on, and how do you like the job she was just getting for you when you left Kitzbühel?"

"That girl?" she said. "How can you ask me?" The lines of her face hardened and she dropped her voice as in speaking of someone who has been found out in an offence so loathsome that it can only be mentioned in a whisper. "Didn't you know?—she is part-*Jewish*."

And then I met Lina. She was strained and worn, looking a dozen years older than in Kitzbühel. "It is coming here", she said, "—the Terror. It's starting already—boycott, insult, dismissals from employment. Soon it will be physical violence. What is the good of you newspaper-men coming to write up picture stories to titillate the appetites of comfortable people in civilised countries, and not rousing the conscience of the world to what is just going to happen to Austria? This country is going to be violated, outraged by ruthless savages with a ruthless creed, thousands are going to be killed and driven deliberately into suicide by a process more cold-blooded than decent murder. It was bad in Germany. It will be far worse here. And it is going to continue week after week, month after month and year after year. Hundreds of thousands are going to be forbidden to earn enough to buy even a crust of bread, driven into exile where no one will receive them, or left to die of starvation like pariah dogs in the gutter. And all this is nothing to you but a first-class 'story' with big headlines. You paint no pictures of the horrors to come, you do nothing to awaken the consciences of your Governments, to warn them that this horrible thing, unless someone takes a stand once and for all, will eat its way through the frontiers into your own countries too. Oh, if I had your chance——"

Seyss-Inquart's train steamed in amidst a wild roaring of "Heil Hitler!" as she turned away.

Among the crowds in the streets I observed the same curious

phenomenon that had struck me in Graz and Vienna—and was later to strike me in the Sudeten districts—the almost complete absence of any representatives of the working classes. Say what they would about the masses behind them, and no matter how many hundreds of thousands of workers they might force out to demonstrations after they had come to power, as the Fatherland Front had done before them, there could be no question but that this Nazi movement was purely one of small middle-class people, engineered and inspired by wealthy members of the upper middle classes. A great deal of solid support was theirs among the primitive peasantry, always glad to find someone who would listen to their necessary grumbling, traditionally victims of the cheapjack at the fairs. The disappointed and embittered small bourgeois, fearing the strength of combined labour from which, although his essential interests lay with them, he allowed himself to be separated by differences of dress and accent, had certainly—at least in the Austrian provinces—swallowed the Nazi bait with its prospects of unlimited plundering of the Jews, hook, line and sinker. But clearly barely a fringe of the labouring masses of the cities and towns had been touched. Nor were there any who looked like thinkers and intellectuals in the ranks of these rhythmic-chanting masses.

Before Seyss-Inquart began his address, the Nazis collected up the foreign Press. They told us that we should be allowed in to hear the first part of the speech, which was to be broadcast, on condition that we left “voluntarily” before the secret conference began. “It goes without saying”, the Nazi spokesman concluded, “that no Jews can be admitted to hear our Leader speak”. An utterly illegal effort to put into force for the first time Nazi Anti-Semitism which was not supposed to be tolerated in Austria. I was glad to see that the few Jews amongst my colleagues took no notice, and came with the rest of us to do their duty, doubly painful though it must have been, of reporting the Nazi demonstration. It was almost the last occasion when they were able to do so, for, with the Nazis in power, it would have meant immediate arrest for any “non-Aryan” correspondent to attempt to earn his living: many were arrested merely on suspicion of that.

Once again the illegal storm-troopers usurped the functions of the police, incidentally giving orders to the journalists and

threatening them with arrest. In the Redoutensaal the assembled Nazi leaders wore their storm-troopers' uniforms, forbidden since 1933. The police could do nothing, for on the platform stood the Police Minister in person.

Seyss-Inquart's speech was a further undermining of everything that Schuschnigg stood for, including Austrian independence. "Austria", he said, "is German and only German. The only guarantee for Austria's independence can be one given by the German people. The spiritual Great German Reich is already a fact."

He gave detailed instructions to his hearers as to how they should evade and violate the laws against Nazi activities. Storm-troopers and S.S., for example, he said, were not allowed as such, but the Nazis must come together in permitted organisation. This was an obvious invitation to the storm-troopers to continue working under another name. The new programme was received with demonstrations of delirious delight. Clearly, Linz was lost too. But I was not now so interested in the provinces and anxious to get back to Vienna. For between the fall of Graz and the collapse of Linz something of the utmost importance had been happening there. Schuschnigg had at last received the real leaders of the workers.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### DEATH-BED REPENTANCE AND LAST RALLY

ON MARCH 4TH, KURT VON SCHUSCHNIGG HAD INTIMATED in strict confidence to the committee of shop stewards from fourteen of the biggest Vienna concerns which had been formed underground to organise the resistance of the masses to the Nazi peril that he would be glad to receive them. Officially he was not supposed to know it—perhaps in the remote world in which he moved he really did not know it—but these men were actually the leaders of the four-year struggle against the Clerico-Fascist system which he had taken over from Dollfuss. Other leaders had been forced out of the struggle into exile, or after imprisonment had become too marked to play an active rôle, but these were their successors. Schuschnigg must have felt at once the difference between these men to whom the workers listened, and to whom they gave their whole confidence, and the façade trade unionists who had been presenting him with millions of supporters—by a “block-vote” system in which they signed for workers who were never consulted—during the last ten days. If he did not know the difference, he was promptly told it. This is how a friend of mine who was on the deputation described its proceedings to me.

The leader of the deputation introduced himself and his comrades and there was all-round handshaking. Then, before Schuschnigg could speak, the men’s leader began :

“Herr Bundeskanzler ! If this meeting which we have tried to bring about in vain for so long, and which has at last come off so terribly late in the day, is to bear any results, there had better be complete frankness from the start. You have not got before you supporters of your Government, of your artificial ‘trades union’ or of the Fatherland Front. We are Austrian workers, and stand for the great mass of the Austrian workers, most of whom were formerly in the Social-Democratic Party and are now organised in various underground movements. We do not come to you either as admirers or friends, but as stern

opponents who would like to find a way of bringing the workers into line—not behind you, for that is beyond our own powers, but beside you, to fight the appalling danger now threatening our country and imperilling above all the class to which we belong. Are you willing to hear us now you know what we stand for? If not, we are wasting your time. We speak plainly, and we propose to continue plain speaking.”

The Chancellor had listened with grave, almost respectful attention and nodded his head. “I quite understand who you are,” he said, “and I appreciate your manly attitude and the moral courage which has enabled you to come and see me, your old enemy. I hope, as you say, that we shall be able to come together in face of the threat to the country in the love of which, if in nothing else, you and I are united.”

This was indeed a death-bed repentance of Schuschnigg's, but such, we are told, has saved many a man's soul, and perhaps this could still save the soul of Austria. What was behind it? On the morning of March 2nd, under the influence of the appalling news from Graz and the knowledge of Seyss-Inquart's treachery there, Schuschnigg had telephoned to Mussolini. He said that he must see him immediately and bring home to him that if he could not use his influence on his partner in the Axis to make him change the tactics he was pursuing against himself, Schuschnigg, Austria would disappear from the map of Europe and Italy be confronted with the German army on the Brenner. Mussolini replied blandly that nothing would please him better than to see Schuschnigg and have a good heart-to-heart talk with him. In fact, he said, he would like to invite Schuschnigg then and there to come to Rome—as soon as ever the forthcoming visit of the Führer was over. If Schuschnigg had still cherished any doubts concerning Mussolini's attitude, he now knew that he had been betrayed again. He had hung up the receiver and sent for the workers' leaders.

The shop stewards went on to tell Schuschnigg some more home truths. They told him frankly that the workers hated his regime, and that if they were to give the workers the slogan “Let us fight and die for Dr. Schuschnigg and the Fatherland Front”, their own influence would in that moment be at an end.

“Herr Bundeskanzler”, one of the men said, “don't think we're trying to be theatrical or create an impression on you when we remind you that only free men will fight, not slaves.

And free men will only fight when they have got something to fight for. First make us Viennese workers free. Give us again the chance of free and unfettered discussion which Dollfuss took away from us in February 1934, free from the presence of your police spies and with assurances that we shall not all be arrested as 'Bolshevist conspirators' if we mention the words Socialism or Karl Marx. Then we shall try to get the workers to agree immediately on a programme of minimum liberties which would enable them to feel they could throw their hearts into—and if necessary give their lives—in the battle by your side as, four years ago, they did against your predecessor and yourself."

Then they presented to the Chancellor the outline of the programme they proposed submitting to the assembly if it were allowed to be held. It ran :

1. Full freedom to profess belief in Socialist and free trades-union principles (such freedom as Schuschnigg had already accorded to the Nazis to profess their submission to the leadership and dictatorship of Adolf Hitler).

2. Freedom to elect their own functionaries from the "Free" (*i.e.*, Socialist) trades unions to positions in the *Gewerkschaftsbund*—the Government-nominated single union; the right to run their own sports and cultural organisations for themselves again; the handing over of posts in the *Gewerkschaftsbund* to men who possessed the real trust of the workers, and the elimination of the renegades from the workers' cause who had been rewarded by fat jobs at the workers' expense.

3. Freedom of political discussion for the workers, the sanctioning of one "Free" trades-union newspaper in which no restrictions should be put upon the right to fight the economic battle of labour; liberty for the trades-union leaders to talk to the workers in meetings of their own without police espionage.

4. Cancellation of all decreed measures of the Clerico-Fascist regime which had impaired the economic position of the workers.

The speakers reminded the Chancellor that they had formed the committee which had drawn up this programme as far back as February 21st, with the idea of offering him the support of the great mass of the workers in the fight for Austrian inde-



pendence, conditional on its acceptance. Ever since they had been asking in vain to be received by him, and the terrible loss of time was no fault of theirs.

After a three-hours' discussion, Schuschnigg gave the necessary guarantees and an assurance to the committee that he would receive them again as soon as they had submitted their programme and his comments to the assembly they demanded. He said that he quite appreciated their point that the workers would never fight with their hands tied behind their backs, and that it was just that they should have something to fight for. He delegated the Labour Minister Rott, Secretary of State Watzek and the *Gewerkschaftsbund* President Staud to continue negotiations with them. He was prepared to go a long way, but he asked his hearers to remember that they must not press him so far as to furnish any excuse for the charge of "conspiring with Bolshevists" which he was quite sure the Nazis would raise the moment they suspected that the workers had decided to support the Government. (Actually, of course, it was just this good old Bolshevist bogey, excuse for countless violations of law, justice and liberty since the War by the Governments of so many countries, which was finally trotted out by the Nazis to justify the rape of Austria.) The workmen's leaders told him that they quite appreciated his point, and would bear it in mind. When I asked one of them afterwards what impression the Chancellor made, he said, "That of a harassed but still unbowed man".

On March 7th, I had a special invitation to attend a big assembly of the leaders of the illegal trades unions in the Workers' Club in Floridsdorf which the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg Cabinet had shelled in 1934. It was the first free and unfettered meeting of the workers' leaders in four years, and it passed off as though those four years had never been. The inevitable mugs of beer and tall glasses of raspberry lemonade were brought round to the little tables by largely the same old waiters who had served in the old building which the Fascist shells had destroyed. The air soon thickened with tobacco smoke, and the guardians of the workers' interests got into their stride almost as though it had never been interrupted. And it was to prevent this sort of thing that all the blood of February 1934 had been shed by the Fascists, and Austria's only solid defences against barbarism destroyed!

"Comrades!" were the first words of the first speaker—

and to hear the long-forbidden greeting of "*Genossen*" alone was a thrill for his hearers—"we begin this as we closed our last and all of our meetings in the old days, with the Socialist salutation"—and his clenched fist shot up—"Freiheit"—"Freedom!" Then the men stood in silence to honour the memory of comrades fallen or hanged in February 1934.

The issue was put very simply. The workers of Austria, the first speaker said, would now have to decide whether the independence of the country was a matter of indifference to them, on the theory that even if one tyrant was not as bad as the other, it was not in the interest of the working-classes to fight at all except in their own cause of casting off the chains of capitalist tyranny. They would further have to consider whether they should support the Schuschnigg regime blindly, because Nazism was such an appalling danger that they must risk even the continuance of the weak authoritarian dictatorship in Austria in order to oppose the Brown terror at any cost. The final choice they had was to draw up a programme of the very minimum liberties necessary to give the workers an interest in the State for which they would find it worth while to risk their lives, obtain binding guarantees from Schuschnigg that they would be accorded these, and then throw their full force into the struggle at his side. He was for the latter course. The second speaker repeated more or less what he had said to Schuschnigg—that free men could fight, but not slaves. The third speaker, a Communist, said that it was a waste of time to debate terms or to try to make a bargain with Schuschnigg. There was one deadly and implacable enemy of the workers of the whole world, one cruel and merciless enslaver, and his name was Adolf Hitler. He was at the very gates of Austria, and the workers must ask no questions as to leadership or the final results, but must bring themselves into the front line and fight side by side with lesser dictators, priests, capitalist employers and anyone else who was prepared to help stem the tide.

The Nazi threat to Austria, declared a fourth speaker, had come into being not on February 12th, 1938, the day of Berchtesgaden, but on February 12th, 1934, when the guns of Dollfuss and Fey had spoken. The declaration that there could be no unconditional support for the man who for four years had upheld the system of tyranny instituted by Dollfuss, feeble and milder though it was than the tyranny of Hitler which now

threatened to break over them, was long and loudly applauded. Still more urgent was it to warn the workers against indifference to the new danger. The debate which followed revealed absolute unanimity for defending Austria's independence, once Schuschnigg had been forced to grant the liberties essential to arousing the masses of workers to fight. A programme approximating to that put before Schuschnigg was drawn up, and the meeting concluded with the "Song of Work"—the Austrian Socialists' anthem—heard for the first time in four years without fear of police breaking in and arresting all present.

The decision then taken was that Dr. Schuschnigg should be told that the workers were going to fight for a free and independent Austria in any way that he needed them when he had given guarantees that the following programme would be fulfilled: Firstly, members of the Left movements to be put on an equal footing respecting political liberties with members of Schuschnigg's Fatherland Front and the Nazis. Secondly, agreement in principle to the restoration of the workers' social clubs, sports and cultural institutions, stolen from them in 1934, the moment that the Nazi advance had been brought to a standstill. Meantime, the *Soziale Arbeitsgemeinschaft*—the general social organisation for workers now run by Clerico-Fascists—should be handed over to the workers themselves. Thirdly, the real leaders of the workers should be appointed to leading positions in the Government trades union, the *Gewerkschaftsbund*; fourthly, at least one of their old newspapers should be restored to the workers as the basis for reconstructing a free labour Press. Fifthly, the pre-1934 social rights of the workers, such as payment for overtime, were to be restored. In their programme, it will be noted, the workers restricted themselves to purely practical points, as Schuschnigg had asked, and avoided raising any theoretical questions concerning democracy or authoritarianism and the future structure of the State. It was a practical programme of practical men to secure vital necessities for the toiling millions. The chairman of the meeting, who was authorised to continue negotiations with Schuschnigg, told his hearers that meantime he had no slogans to give them, other than those which, despite persecution, had built up the great workers' movement under the Habsburgs, had enabled it to reach the post-war zenith and had sustained them through the past four years of suppression—unity, strict discipline, un-

wavering courage and faith in the cause of the masses, for whose needs and rights it was their job to fight.

On the following Monday, March 7th, a smaller delegation saw Schuschnigg again and informed him of the programme. Schuschnigg told them that their demands were stiff but, he thought, justified. Only as to the restoration of the confiscated property, he said that while he agreed in principle, they must not press him for immediate fulfilment, as the property was now in other hands, and the matter would require negotiation and adjustment. But he hoped that they could accept his promise that they should get their property back eventually. The delegation said that they understood his difficulties and would accept this; Schuschnigg handed over the details of further negotiations to two of his heads of departments, and told the workers that if they encountered any unreasonable opposition, they were to come back to him and he would simply override his subordinates. Schuschnigg's apologists, as I have said, now put the blame on the Socialists for not having recognised Nazism as so great a peril as to give unconditional support to Schuschnigg. That is bad logic. As often as I spoke to Socialist "Illegals" they insisted on the greater peril which the Nazis represented. But they argued that the masses would never follow them in an alliance with the "bloodhounds" of February 1934 unless the latter reversed their whole policy. Further, they felt that the whole programme of the "Christian, Corporative State" was so lifeless and so hated that adherence to it would be simply the emergence of rats from temporarily safe holes to board a sinking ship. They preferred to stay put and prepare an eventual come-back under the Nazis after the triumph of the latter.

On the previous Monday night I had returned to Vienna in the train with Seyss-Inquart and Dadieu. When we stopped at the Semmering I noticed a number of Nazis on the train removing the forbidden Swastika from their buttonholes, and made a sarcastic comment on it to Dadieu, who said carelessly: "Yes, Schuschnigg's Austria is still holding the Semmering frontier, but it won't last long". It hadn't lasted. Now, a week later, the poison had spread to the streets of the capital. Not yet had anyone ventured to fly the Swastika banner. Not yet were the shops filled with tasteless postcards showing a Swastika sun rising over the Stephanskirche, as in Graz they showed it rising over the Schlossberg. (Friends of all political

shades in Vienna had asked incredulously to see my already famous collection of a dozen of these monstrosities which I had brought back.) But the storm-troopers and the S.S.—without uniforms, of course, save for the white stockings—were already becoming active. The “travelling circus” had obviously started operations in the capital.

Every day there was an increase in the number of individuals who promenaded up and down the Kärntnerstrasse simply in order to challenge the authority of the police by giving the Hitler salute to perfect strangers. As the gathering dusk lent them courage, the storm-troopers and S.S. began to collect nightly outside the official German tourist office opposite the Opera. This office had been established a year before, and an over life-size oil-painting of Hitler planted opposite the principal window. What this extraordinarily unflattering portrait of the German Nazi leader, apparently painted on the morning after the night before, had to do with buying tickets to Berlin or Hamburg, nobody could have explained. The bureau was not, of course, opened for the sake of tourists, but for purely political propaganda. Ordinary people who looked at the portrait said that the painter must obviously be as good a Nazi as he was a bad artist, otherwise he would have been promptly arrested and shot for insulting the Führer. Its display was just one of a thousand little provocations which the Third Reich had hit upon to trouble the Austrian Government, and there were many quarrels in front of it between Nazis and non-Nazis. One night a couple of months back one of Hitler's Jewish victims had kicked a hole in the window. Next morning there were big Anti-Semitic propaganda notices pasted inside the window, which was deliberately left unrepaired. Within a week, storm-troopers had smashed over a score of big plate-glass windows in Jewish shops. Now this tourist bureau had become the rallying-point for the Nazis in the Inner City.

On Monday night and again on Tuesday night I watched from the doors of the German travel bureau the illegal storm-troopers illegally gathering under the colonnades of the Opera House and the eyes of the police. The only action which the police took was to threaten me and others with arrest if we continued to watch them; against the illegal gathering they took not the slightest action. When about a thousand had collected, at a given signal the trained chorus started to beat

the tom-tom of "*Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!*"—which soon swelled to a menacing roar. Then the Nazi mob, rapidly swollen to some 5000, started off down the Kärntnerstrasse and Rotenturmstrasse to the Danube Canal, across which lay the big Jewish quarter, the Leopoldstadt. Nothing was spontaneous about the demonstrations. It was just a gigantic conspiracy, in which everything went according to plan, directed by an invisible hand. Even the shouting, as Nazi organisers would admit to me on being questioned, was regulated by orders from the higher command. On one night not one single voice would shout "Heil Hitler"; thousands would chant "Sieg Heil". Then "Heil Hitler" would be sanctioned, but "*Juden hinaus*"—"Out with the Jews"—forbidden. Quite deliberately these modern dervishes worked themselves up into the requisite state of mental intoxication by easily recognisable stages. Having reached the stage prescribed for the night, at the appointed hour the supply of intoxicant was cut off at the main, the devil-dance subsided and the performers dispersed as at a word of command. But each night the performance went a stage further. Police were always there in abundance in their swift-moving "Alarm Commando" charabancs, but their only function seemed to be to keep the demonstrations on the prescribed route and to see that they were not interrupted by any supporters of the legal Government.

On Tuesday the situation had grown worse. Throughout the day business was at a standstill in the Inner City owing to the incessant political demonstrations. One needed to be in a dozen places at once, and I spent most of my time dashing about in taxis from one danger-point to another. Outside the University Nazi students were demonstratively hailing Hitler practically without cessation all day. In the Kärntnerstrasse everybody seemed to be wearing either the Fatherland Front ribbon or the forbidden Swastika badge, which now made its first appearance in the Vienna streets. Shouts of "Heil Schuschnigg!" were answered with shouts of "Heil Hitler!"

I seemed to be the only person in the Kärntnerstrasse with nothing in his button-hole, and by way of a change bought myself a red carnation in a flowershop. Why not? The Duke of Windsor always wore one, and some people said that there was a sort of "Windsor-Jacobite" movement in England whose members always wore them. The effect was startling. I had hardly come out of the shop when a Swastika-wearing Nazi turned round



and snarled at me, "So you people are there again, are you?" Quick as lightning, an electrician in blue overalls turned on him and said, "We have always been there, but you Nazis never knew it, because you always have your mouths so wide open that your eyes are shut." An old working-woman grabbed my elbow in her roughened hands and said, "Thank you, *Genosse*: it is about time we showed our colours too." Next day I saw three red carnations in the Kärntnerstrasse and the day after a dozen. The Duke of Windsor's stock seemed to be rising.

The Graben, too, was seldom without its shouting demonstrators. "Heil—dem—Kanz—ler—Kurt—von—Schuschnigg", one group would shout, each syllable in time with the step, and behind them another "Wir—dan—ken—uns—rem—Füh—rer—Heil Hitler". "Rot—weiss—rot—bis—in—den—Tod!" Austrian patriots would shout, proclaiming their colour, to be answered from the opposite pavement by "Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!" Clashes were frequent, and here and there the police would dash in with their truncheons. But somehow it was usually the Government supporters who got beaten up. From their headquarters in the house where I lived in the Habsburgergasse the Sturmkorps made a sally one evening to break up an anti-Schuschnigg Nazi demonstration. I watched the Nazi leader go to the police station on the Petersplatz to complain, and ten minutes later three of Schuschnigg's police came to the headquarters of Schuschnigg's Sturmkorps and arrested one of his supporters for beating up one of his enemies. The police were obeying Seyss-Inquart and already disregarding the Chancellor.

One order at least the Chancellor managed to get enforced that night despite the treachery with which he was surrounded. Captain Leopold, who had been forced to leave Austria for ever under the Berchtesgaden Agreement, was back and making himself the centre of the gathering revolt. Somehow Schuschnigg managed to force Seyss-Inquart to send him off again, and I went to the station to see his departure. An insignificant, plump, blond little man with thinning hair, a square jaw and snub nose, he stood in the window of his carriage watched by the adoring eyes of a couple of hundred followers. A strong force of police was on the platform. They did nothing to stop the illegal demonstrations, while the railwaymen glowered bitterly at them and the Nazis. As the train steamed off the Nazis sang



the Horst Wessel song. The gold-braided police inspector, with his tall Austrian *kepi* and long greatcoat, raised his hands deprecatingly. "Please, please," he said, "you know that is not allowed. Now come, don't get me into difficulties."

"*Herr Inspektor*," said a Nazi, who flaunted in his button-hole the Swastika, for wearing which it was the duty of the police to arrest him immediately, "remember that we Nazis fought with you against the Red workers of Vienna."

The inspector nodded and smiled. "We all know in the police," he said, "what an exceptionally valuable force in the country you are."

Police and conspirators parted on the best of terms.

About the same time another man left Vienna for Germany—General Glaise von Horstenau, whom Dr. Schuschnigg had made Minister of the Interior after the July 1936 Agreement with Germany. He was to return on March 11th—bearing the ultimatum and threat of invasion from the German Chancellor to his own Chancellor. General Glaise had always declared that he was no Nazi, but a "nationally minded" Austrian. As such, and expressly because he was "not a Nazi", did Schuschnigg accept him as one of his own Ministers in 1936. After the betrayal of Austria this gallant officer wrote an article which was published in the official gazette, the *Wiener Zeitung*, on July 10th, 1938, in which he exposed himself in such a way that I will quote some of his own words. They show the type of man to whom Schuschnigg gave his trust in the fight against Nazism. It would be a pity to spoil his self-supplied record by any comment apart from the reminder that they are those of a man who took the oath of loyalty to Austria as a Minister and colleague of Dr. Schuschnigg—the oath of a Nazi—written while his former Chief was in the prison of the Gestapo, to whom Glaise had helped to betray him. He speaks first of his entry into the Cabinet under the 1936 Agreement, and of his secret visit beforehand to Hitler.

"Without the consent of the Führer and German Chancellor, without the Führer's 'blessing,' it was something unthinkable for any National personality to join an Austrian Government. Its head was not prepared to give the dominant ideology of the Third Reich any chance of developing in Austria, and wished strongly to oppose it. I was . . . in constant connection with the German Legation through my link with it, that invaluable fighter for the National cause, the German Military Attaché

General Muff. On the afternoon of July 10th, 1936, I had an audience in Obersalzberg with the Führer. I left Vienna with the German Minister, Herr von Papen, at 4 a.m. The journey had to be kept secret. In Salzburg I changed into a taxi. In the Grand Hotel in Berchtesgaden the German Foreign Minister, Von Neurath, and the Ambassador to London, Von Ribbentrop, were waiting for us. We pretended not to recognise one another. The world had to be taken by surprise by the forthcoming Austro-German Agreement.

"In the afternoon we went up to Obersalzberg. A few minutes later I stood with beating heart (after having rendered the Hitler salute, forbidden in my own country) before the Führer. I permitted myself to tell him that I did not wish to appear as on a diplomatic mission, but as a German before the Leader of the German people. . . . Deeply was I moved by his belief in his own mission which Providence had entrusted to him. This faith in the breast of a God-blessed genius—I was sure of it in that moment—was able to move mountains—yes, and more important, frontier posts! As I drove back, I stood on the threshold of advancement—next morning I was to become a Minister. . . . The Agreement of July 1936 fulfilled, as we see in looking back, its great function in the life of the nation. Despite the stubbornness of the enemy, it loosened in Austria the Nationalist soil. It helped me to prevent the Austrian question from coming up for solution at some moment which would not have suited the Reich."

After seeing Leopold off at the West station I drove with a friend to a certain obscure café in the 6th district. We spoke to a man at a table, who went downstairs and came back to tell me I could go down. In the cellar below the café, which was heated by a ramshackle old coke-oven and dimly lighted, were seated twenty-four men of all ages with masses of papers spread before them. They were the underground—to-night literally underground—leaders of the workers who were trying to fix up terms for co-operation with Schuschnigg. I cannot give you their names because some of them—if they are not dead yet—are in the hands of the Nazis, others in exile abroad but perhaps not identified, others on the run in Austria, and some even going quietly about their business in that country because their connection with the hated shop-stewards' committee is not known. They motioned me to a seat and went on with their deliberations. One of them read out his report of the day's negotiations with Herr Staud, head of the Fascist trades union. Staud, he said, had been extremely obstinate. After long discussions he had refused to the Socialist trades-union representatives the posts which Schuschnigg had promised them. The other had

threatened to refer back the whole matter to Schuschnigg. Finally Staud had said, "All right, we shall do without you. To-night Schuschnigg is announcing in Innsbruck that he will hold a plebiscite on Sunday on the question of Austria's independence. I don't need to surrender anything to you Socialists. You'll just have to vote for Schuschnigg anyway. I will meet you again next Wednesday, after the plebiscite. You know what happened to the workers' leaders in Germany, and if you don't vote for Schuschnigg you'll be the first people to enter the concentration camps." The Socialist leader continued that he had replied :

"You are mistaken, Herr Staud. In Germany the Nazis had been fighting the Socialists for years; here they have been fighting you of the Fatherland Front. They will arrest us right enough, but when we land in a concentration camp, we shall find you people there already, and terribly beaten up at that."

Ten days later the wife of one of these shop stewards was in my house, asking if there were anything that could be done to save her husband—the Nazis had got him in prison. I told her, of course, that he was beyond human help and asked if she knew whether he was being beaten. "Not up till yesterday," she said, "when I got a message smuggled out from him. But the man who was in his cell when he got there was in a shocking state—beaten almost to a jelly." "Who was it?" I asked her, and got the answer, "Staud—head of the old Government's fake trade union."

Apart from the trouble with Staud, things seemed to be going well. It had already been fixed that the *Soziale Arbeitsgemeinschaft* was to be handed over to one of the steadiest and pluckiest young leaders of the underground movement, whom I had last seen in court standing his trial for being a Socialist, Ernst Karl Sailer, and who was now sitting at the long table with the others. The "free newspaper" question had been settled, together with several others, but the trades-union business was vital. Some speakers wondered whether it would be better to drop all conditions and tell the workers to back Schuschnigg anyway. But others pointed out that they were not storm-troop leaders, nor were the workers militarised and unthinking automatons like the Nazis. If they told them to follow Schuschnigg without securing them their trades-union liberties, the workers would look on it as a betrayal and their own influence

would be gone. The trades-union question had to be settled first. Schuschnigg had said he would see them next day to clean it up if there were time before he left for Innsbruck. If there were time—but he expected these men to be able to swing round the millions of Austrian workers to his side by Sunday—and already it was nearly Wednesday morning. Was Schuschnigg again being betrayed by his inability to judge human values? Here he was letting these key men wait while he rushed down to Innsbruck to his tried supporters—to preach to the converted.

There must have been a deep psychological necessity which drove Schuschnigg to follow this course. He saw now the full extent of his betrayal at Berchtesgaden. No promise made to him had been kept, and faster than he could fulfil those he had made, fresh demands were being forced on him. He knew that the Nazis were a highly efficient, disciplined and ruthless conspiracy of a minority. He knew, and Austrians knew, that at least two-thirds of the country could not possibly wish to commit national suicide. But behind this violent Nazi conspiracy was the ruler of 66,000,000 Germans, who had at last thrown off the mask. His troops were massed on the frontier, his plans were in Schuschnigg's hands—to order his followers to continue setting the law at defiance up to a point where there was no alternative but for Schuschnigg himself to employ force. Then the invasion would begin. The moment had come for Schuschnigg to play his trump card and stake everything on it. But he could not play it here in Vienna, surrounded by traitors, harassed by Seyss-Inquart, bombarded every minute by Nazi protests, demands and vilifications employed in accordance with their established wearing-down tactics. He had to find strength and the nerve to fight his last battle among his own people who spoke his language with his own Tyrolese accent, to draw new courage amidst the shelter of the majestic Alps surrounding the city where he had grown to maturity, Innsbruck.

So it was there, encouraged by the lusty cheering of the countrymen of that great peasant patriot, Andreas Hofer, who had been loyal to Austria and given his life for Austria, while Vienna disowned him and let the invader shoot him down, that Schuschnigg issued his last challenge. Now the secret was out that I had to keep for so long. For years the Nazis had used the parrot cry of "Plebiscite" to harass Dollfuss and Schuschnigg. Very well, then,—they should have their plebiscite—yet

not their plebiscite, but one held so quickly that there would be no time for them to fling terror and the weight of the Third Reich into the scales.

Schuschnigg's voice came over the radio that Wednesday night as that of a man keyed up to the highest pitch of emotion, imbued with a flaming conviction of the justice of his cause, confident of his claim to victory, yet somehow even then doubtful whether he would be given time to get the answer to the question he asked so passionately: "What do all Austrians want? I must know whether the people of Austria approve of the path we propose to take." And a note almost of hysteria crept into his usually level tones as he cried again: "Now I will know, and I must know, whether the people of Austria want this free and German, independent, social, Christian and united Fatherland". What a tale this man could have told of treachery, browbeating and double-dealing—yet he must not speak out, the old pretence that he was dealing with an opponent as honourable as himself had to be kept up, and one could feel that the suppression of the truth was putting the utmost strain on his self-control.

The old formulas were gone through with a new fervour—"Christian, German, Social". But there was once more no word of "authoritarian" or of "corporative"—thus, no more dictatorship, no more Fascism. That was to the good—but it was negative. Would the millions of workers who were waiting for a sign appreciate what this meant? Would the man never find one common word in which to speak to the common people whose cause was the same as his? Here indeed he could be cheered to the echo by the Catholic, Germanic peasants of Tyrol. But what of the Vienna proletariat? Then at last came something which they would understand, uttered in tones of passionate indignation.

"There is one thing I will not tolerate. If a member of the former Social-Democratic Party comes to our ranks and puts up the patriotic emblem of the Front, I will not have it suggested that ours is a Red front, that the admission to our ranks of a Socialist means Bolshevism. Such talk must cease." That, I am sure, is what Schuschnigg said. But even in Innsbruck he was harassed by traitors. The relay of his speech to Vienna was deliberately overlaid by a Nazi operator with an opera transmission, and a jumbled version was later published

in which Schuschnigg was made to say that a Socialist could not be regarded as a full member of the Fatherland Front, even if he wore its badge, and he would never be allowed to talk Bolshevism in its ranks. . . .

My colleague dropped her note-pad and I switched off the deafening cheers which followed the speech.

"Got it all?" I asked.

"Yes," she said.

"What is the question to be put at the referendum?" I asked. "I'm afraid I missed that."

She looked through her verbatim notes carefully.

"'The slogan is,'" she read out, "'For a free and German, an independent and social, a Christian and united Austria'."

"Yes, the slogan," I said impatiently. "I got that too. But the Austrians have got to answer yes or no to a question on Sunday. What is it? I want that for my lead."

She looked through her notes again.

"I can't find the question either," she said. "It isn't possible that Schuschnigg has forgotten to formulate it?"

It was. He had.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### INTERLUDE AT WESTMINSTER

ASKED IN THE HOUSE ON FEBRUARY 16TH WHAT THE GOVERNMENT thought about the Berchtesgaden Agreement, Mr. Anthony Eden replied that he could say nothing, as they had not got the text of the Agreement. And anyway, the Stresa Agreement bound Britain, France and Italy to consult together whenever Austria should be in danger, and Italy had not yet consulted the other signatories.

Did the Chamberlain Government for whom Eden had to give this reply really consider that Austria was not in danger after the disastrous journey to Berchtesgaden, merely because Italy, who they must have known had betrayed Schuschnigg to Hitler, had not come around to tell them so? Whether their attitude was dictated by naïvety or hypocrisy, it was to prove disastrous for Austria.

In the Lords on February 17th, Lord Allen of Hurtwood was rebuked for declaring that in Austria's situation we were faced with a fresh attempt to effect change by violence. Piously Lord Halifax murmured that a certain reserve was advisable about Austria, protesting that the National Government was "not yet in a position" to estimate the effect which the latest agreement between Germany and Austria would have.

Not yet in a position! And we had for days been cabling home stories of the seething Nazi revolt. Not yet—although Hitler was in three days' time to pour out his contempt for Britain in connection with Austria for all the world to hear on the radio, and to insult Eden so coarsely that hearing it we said gleefully: "The fool has saved Eden by over-stepping the mark at the very moment when he seemed likely to fall—even Chamberlain cannot swallow such orders from Hitler to dismiss his Foreign Secretary". But that night Eden went, and Sir John Reith's great organisation described the Hitler speech as a "friendly gesture" towards England! In any case, it was a fraud on the public for the Government to pretend that they could not esti-



mate the situation until they knew every detail of the Agreement, when the British Minister in Vienna had told them, and when all the world knew from our cables, that Hitler had delivered an ultimatum backed by a threat of invasion. And this was called by Lord Halifax just an "agreement between Germany and Austria". An agreement between the wolf and the lamb!

Then Arthur Henderson—it took three weeks for even the Opposition to get so far—reminded the House that the Austrian Chancellor had clearly been confronted by an ultimatum which had forced him to conclude an agreement under circumstances which gravely impaired the sovereignty and independence of his Government. The Tory benches howled their indignation and shouted "No, no!" Chamberlain, said Henderson, had declared that the measures taken by Schuschnigg in pursuance of this agreement did not amount to a violation of Austria's treaty obligations to preserve her independence. But regard should be had to the circumstances under which the Berchtesgaden Agreement had been brought into being. He asked whether the Government's legal advisers had considered this aspect.

The British Prime Minister's answer should never be forgotten, in the light of what the world knows to be the truth. He said it was not possible to assert from a juristic standpoint that a country had sacrificed its independence to another because two statesmen had come to an agreement that certain changes in their relations would be to the advantage of each. (And yet Birmingham is supposed to produce Britain's Best Business Men!) Schuschnigg's speech to the Diet, he said, did not give rise to the impression that Schuschnigg himself felt he had sacrificed his country's independence. (Did Chamberlain expect anyone in Schuschnigg's desperate position to proclaim his own defeat?) It was still—this was on March 2nd, nine days before the German invasion—too early to estimate the results of the Agreement made on February 12th. Hitler had himself in his Reichstag speech referred to the Agreement of 1936, and that contained Germany's guarantee of Austria's independence. For the present, Mr. Chamberlain thought, they should leave it at that. Quite—Hitler needed nine more days and Chamberlain was going to see that he had them. And not a voice was raised to point out that Chamberlain had not dared to answer the question, which asked whether *the fact* of the German ultimatum to Austria had been taken into consideration by his

Government. Now of course Hitler was certain that Chamberlain dare not or would not protest, whatever he did.

On Austria's last day but one, March 10th, Henderson returned to the attack. Had Chamberlain, he asked, no statement to make concerning Schuschnigg's intention to hold a plebiscite on the question of Austrian independence on March 13th?

"No, sir," replied the Premier, amidst enthusiastic applause from most parts of the Tory benches.

It was a great thing to applaud, was it not? A little country, threatened with invasion by a powerful neighbour, was going to try to make her voice heard. The fate of a key position in the defence of the British route to the East, which since its creation twenty years before Britain had so regarded and so defended, was at stake. The Head of the National Government had nothing to say on the most burning question in the world at the moment. Hoo-ray—hoo-bloody-ray!

Mr. Henderson: "Will not the Premier, in consideration of the special circumstances in which Austria finds herself, at least express the hope of his Government—" [The Tories interrupted with such a roaring of "No—no" that it was some minutes before Henderson could continue (the Premier has no hope to express—Hoo-ray again!)] "that this plebiscite may be carried through without foreign interference and without pressure from abroad, in order that the Austrian people shall be really able to make use of its unhindered right of self determination?" Britain's Premier maintained silence—a silence that meant consent to Hitler for the orders for invasion and rebellion which at once went forth from Berlin. Not so the Tory members, for Mr. Thorne asked Chamberlain whether he had noticed that the shouts of the Tories came from those who favoured a German invasion of Austria. There was no answer. Britain's Premier had nothing to say, no hope to express, he had noticed nothing. Hoo-ray, hoo-ray!

CHAPTER XXV  
FINIS AUSTRIÆ

BY HIS INNSBRUCK SPEECH SCHUSCHNIGG GAVE BACK TO Austria the voice which Dollfuss had stifled just five years before, in March 1933. His courageous decision to make an eleventh-hour appeal to the people to decide the issue for themselves completely changed the situation. Hardly had the speech ended than a new aspect came over the streets in Vienna. Everywhere one saw happy faces. Eyes lit up with the enthusiasm of having at last a task to perform, a chance to fight and win through. Ever since the news that, without allowing his followers to know a word of his plans, Schuschnigg had accepted the invitation of Austria's deadliest enemy and was already in Berchtesgaden had stunned the Austrian people a bare month before, the people had been in a maze. There had been so much concealment and lying in a ridiculous attempt to spare their feelings, so many attempts to break gently the news of one surrender after the other in high quarters, so much obvious but unacknowledged treachery on the part of most of Schuschnigg's collaborators, especially on the part of the one he had known longest, Seyss-Inquart, his old comrade-in-arms on the Isonzo front, that his supporters had been dazed and paralysed. Fundamentally, it seemed to them, nothing had happened to justify the long series of humiliations which had come upon them with bewildering rapidity. The Nazis were no stronger than they had been at the time when Schuschnigg had settled their revolt in four days—they were, in fact, numerically weaker. Nothing had been said to the rank-and-file supporters of the desertion by Mussolini, of Schuschnigg's agony in Berchtesgaden, of the German troops massed on their frontiers, the brutal threats and the four weeks' ultimatum of Hitler, cold indifference of Downing Street and the vagueness of the Quai d'Orsay. Befogged and bewildered, forbidden to pay back the Nazis in their own coin of aggression and violence, they were like some great mastiff muzzled and chained, subjected to the

incessant yapping and snapping of a free and unmuzzled terrier. The far bigger mass of the workers, better trained politically, did know a great deal about the outside influences which were paralysing Schuschnigg. But they, too, were helpless to move without a rallying cry, for in defence of the authoritarian Fascist State, which had destroyed all they had built up in half a century, they could not bring themselves to move, not even to prevent a worse tyrant from riveting fresh chains and the existing ones still more firmly around their necks. Their exiled leaders, Bauer and Deutsch, had told them to march in line with Schuschnigg if he would give them at least the same rights as he had already accorded to his enemies, the Nazis. That was all they had—a parole with a peradventure.

Now at last Schuschnigg had spoken. The newspapers brought the exact form of question which he had omitted to formulate in Innsbruck: "Are you for an independent and social, a Christian, German and united Austria?" It was not the ideal formula, but it would serve. In this hour of danger, bourgeoisie, workers and peasants, Socialists, Communists and Catholics, Monarchists, aristocrats and toiling proletarians, could answer, all of them "Yes", with the knowledge that "No" meant a vote for national suicide and the unchaining of the Hitler terror.

More than once in the preceding few days I had told Schuschnigg's supporters that for me the most depressing sight in Vienna was the contrast between the little bands of Fatherland Front people shouting in an embarrassed manner for the Chancellor and the full-throated, fanatical roaring of the Nazis. "Unfortunately that cannot be helped", they replied. "It is not in the nature of the Viennese to make politics by bawling and brawling in the streets. The real Viennese discusses his differences over a café table and goes like a civilised being to the polls. If only the question could be put to the vote, you would see how the Nazi minority would be swamped. But if political power is going to depend on lung-power, you are right that we are fighting a losing battle."

Now the issue was to be put to the vote. "It is a finely courageous piece of work by Schuschnigg and a first-class tactical move", one of my foreign diplomatic friends said to me on Wednesday night. "His friends say privately that he is sure of seventy to eighty per cent. of the votes; neutral observers fix sixty-five per cent. as the absolute minimum—always provided that he is allowed to hold the plebiscite." Victory being

so certain, it was deplorable that in the first newspapers issued late on Wednesday night, it was declared that only "Yes" voting papers would be provided and that the "No's" would have to make theirs out for themselves. Furthermore, secrecy of the ballot was only offered rather contemptuously to "those who wanted it", while semi-official commentators suggested that a true patriot would be glad to show his colours by publicly voting "Yes". This was an ugly and extremely foolish business. Some people around Schuschnigg had tried to be much too clever in the emulation of typical Nazi tactics, for at this stage unbacked paper support was clearly quite valueless to Schuschnigg; what he needed was not figures, but fists clenched in the determination to fight for independence. True, these stupidities were cancelled fairly promptly. "No" voters were placed on a level with the "Yes" voters and the secret vote made general. Although this preliminary blunder left a bad impression and enabled people to hint at "Jesuit influence", the masses began to laugh—and with them surely the angels—when the Nazis, stage managers of the Reichstag-fire elections and of a whole series of faked plebiscites conducted with the aid of terrorism and trickery, began to talk of "dishonest" plebiscite proposals! Their loudest protests were directed at the fixing of twenty-four as the minimum age-limit for voters. As the Nazi strength lay amongst the unripe youth of seventeen to twenty-four, with quite a sprinkling of schoolboys and schoolgirls of fourteen to sixteen, this condition as good as excluded from the polls about a third of their rowdiest supporters. Yet Dr. Schuschnigg's restriction was not only legal, but even imposed on him by the Constitution, which laid down that "all citizens are entitled to vote who have completed their twenty-fourth year".

Dr. Schuschnigg's secret had been well kept, and the plebiscite announcement took the wind completely out of the sail of the Nazis. They boasted later that a secretary of Zernatto, Secretary-General of the Fatherland Front, had betrayed it to them, but their obvious amazement over the speech belies this. In the Kärntnerstrasse the usual daily demonstration by the un-uniformed storm-troopers and the counter-demonstrations of the Fatherland Front continued on Thursday, and most businesses were again closed. But the initiative and enthusiasm had passed to Schuschnigg's supporters, and now it was the Nazis who were clearly bewildered and downcast.

And something else. For the first time since February 1934 I saw the little metal badge of the Socialists, the Three Arrows, worn in the streets, and here and there the clenched fist salute of "Freedom". Not more than a dozen risked arrest in that way this morning. But it was a beginning of the rebirth of political liberty. The night before the police had had orders in the working-class suburbs to order anyone wearing the Three-Arrows badge to put it in his pocket, but not to arrest him. Now they had—with sour faces—to tolerate even the wearing of the badge. A new alliance was beginning to cement itself, and the wearers of Schuschnigg's red-white-red ribbon, meeting the Three-Arrow men, raised their two fingers in the Fatherland Front salute and cried "Heil Schuschnigg!" The Socialists smiled back, raising their clenched fists with the shout "Freedom, Austria!"

Before noon the Nazis got their first instructions from Germany. Not till the night did the orders arrive concerning Sunday's plebiscite—abstain and disturb—but the order of the day was clearly to cry havoc and slip the dogs of war. Up and down the Kärntnerstrasse went the Nazi "travelling post offices"—the sellers of the new-born Anti-Semitic *Volksruf*, which was already fouling the streets of Vienna with a pathological sadism and pornography rivalling that of Streicher's *Stürmer*. With the paper storm-troop section leaders got the instructions of the higher command for immediate action. I watched the first demonstrators, some marching in columns of fours under the eyes of the police—wild-eyed boys from the Technical High School, most of them—converging on the centre of disorder, the German Government's Tourist Bureau, and its Hitler portrait. As the defiant shouts arose of "*Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer*", the adult Viennese began to laugh. "We must not mind the children shouting a bit to-day", they said, "now that they have been told they are too young to go to the polls." The Swastika badge was now being worn generally; the younger the boy, the bigger the Swastika. Mounted, foot and motorised police were everywhere in evidence and everywhere inactive. From four o'clock onwards the Inner City was a pandemonium abandoned to a howling mob. The police did nothing until window-smashing started, and then just formed cordons to prevent an extension of the damage. Yet even here, at the heart of the middle-class districts, the wearers of Swastikas were outnumbered by those who wore the Front ribbon—I had a careful

count made in a number of streets—by three to one. In the working-class districts, of course, the Nazis had barely a foothold. And yet, thanks to the police, they were allowed to dominate the streets.

The workers were restive, and awaited only the word to act. At five o'clock a trades-union leader came to see me, almost in tears. "Is there still treachery in the Fatherland Front," he said, "or just sheer block-headedness? Last night in Floridsdorf our people, maddened by the insolence of these Nazi pups, came to me and demanded that they too should go on the march in formation through the streets. I asked Fatherland Front headquarters, and guaranteed that our people would not carry as much as a walking-stick by way of a weapon, and that without it we would clean the streets of Nazis wherever we could find them. The Front officials refused to sanction it."

"What about the negotiations?" I said. "Hasn't the pact been fixed and signed yet? The plebiscite is on Sunday, and still the leaders have given no definite parole?"

"Negotiations are going badly, too," he said. "Schuschnigg's man Staud refuses obdurately to discuss matters any further, and clings to the posts created for himself and his creatures of the Clerico-Fascist fake trade-union, the *Gewerkschaftsbund*. We have got word to Schuschnigg, but we cannot get at him for a talk to-day—he is being swamped by organised Nazi squeals and protests. Seyss has called up Dadieu in Graz and many other leaders urging them to threaten a storm-trooper's Putsch if the plebiscite is held. They say Seyss also threatened a German invasion, but of course that's bluff. If that were tried, Schuschnigg would be bound to fight and to arm the workers. The army would stand with him to ninety per cent. or more. Then the traitors among the police would not dare to act. We need only to offer resistance on the frontier for twenty-four hours, long enough for Britain, France and Italy to realise what is afoot, and they would stop it with an ultimatum to Berlin."

"I wonder. The French pronounce the British Premier's name as M. 'Neville J'aime-Berlin'. Ribbentrop is on his way to London, and has many friends in high places there. Mussolini is getting brown as a berry, ski-ing in the Italian Alps, and I am not quite sure of the exact colour of this week's Government in Paris. If Austria is to be saved, this thing has got to be settled in Austria, and settled quickly. Schuschnigg should clear up



the trades-union muddle within an hour, put an R.S. man on the ether and let him call out all the factory workers to march round the city this very night, carrying ' *Ja* ' banners for the plebiscite."

"We know, we know," he said, "far better than you can, how urgent it is, and what this muddle and delay are costing."

"Must you wait for Schuschnigg?" I asked him. "Must you really have the signed agreement? I am beginning to think the Communist tactics may be better than yours; they have no agreement with Schuschnigg and do not seek it, but they have given all their people the slogan to do nothing to hinder, and to go to the limit to help the Fatherland Front, unconditionally, to vote ' *Ja* ' as one man and to fight the Nazis. As things are going, the plebiscite will be on you before you have given your people a lead."

"That's all very well for the Communists," he said. "Their people are trained to follow the ' Party Line ', ours to listen to their leaders, then use their own judgment and make up their mind for themselves. We've got to justify our lead, the Communists merely to give one. Anyhow, Schuschnigg has promised to see us at three o'clock to-morrow, Friday. And Ernst Karl Sailer is almost certainly going on the air that same evening, to give the workers the parole."

Sailer was the young and capable democratic leader who had been the hero of the great " Sailer Trial " in 1936. No man was more trusted in the whole of Austria by the workers than this level-headed young Socialist. I stared at him incredulously.

"Sailer?" I said. "But he is the real goods! This means liberty again in Austria—the end of the Dollfuss dictatorial course."

"Yes," he said, "it will mean that. What is more, we have fixed it for Sailer to take charge of the *Soziale Arbeitsgemeinschaft*. If only it comes off, Austria has nothing to fear. But keep all this to yourself, and be patient until seven-thirty to-morrow night. That is when Sailer is to speak, and by then we shall know." By seven-thirty p.m. next evening we had heard everything. Not from the lips of Ernst Karl Sailer, but from those of the ex-Chancellor.

Late that night—Thursday, March 10th—the Committee of the Revolutionary Socialists, without even waiting to see Schuschnigg and obtain from him the enforcement of the agreed terms which Staud was resisting, drew up and printed for distribution

one hundred thousand copies of a leaflet calling on the workers to vote for Schuschnigg on Sunday. It was a defiant declaration with no trace of surrender to the man they offered to support.

“Workers! Comrades!” [it ran]. “The form of plebiscite dictated by Schuschnigg puts before you the alternative of either voting ‘Yes’ or of helping Hitler-Fascism to power. Hitler’s victory will mean not only the bloody suppression and limitless exploitation of the Austrian workers: it will mean a defeat for the cause of the workers of the whole world and a strengthening of the inhuman dictatorship which German National Fascism has set up over the workers of Germany.

“The Austrian workers, therefore, cannot answer ‘No’ to Schuschnigg’s question on Sunday, because this would aid Hitlerism. Sunday is not the day to repay Austrian Fascism and the authoritarian régime by voting against Schuschnigg for all the crimes it has committed against the workers since February 1934. Sunday is the day for showing our bitter hostility to Hitler-Fascism. On that day, therefore, the whole working-class must vote:

“‘Ja.’

“The February fighting and the bravely borne sacrifices in the four years of illegality have shown the world how the workers can resist Austro-Fascism. Sunday’s plebiscite will not change this. Nor will it decide the fate of Austria. Schuschnigg can win it with the help of the workers, and yet Austria will be lost in the end should the workers fail to continue their struggle for full political and trades-union freedom with increased driving force. It is not this paper-vote on Sunday, but the final success of the struggle to overthrow National Fascism which alone can ensure the continued independence of Austria. Down with Hitler-Fascism! Freedom!”

Throughout the night from Thursday to Friday my telephone kept ringing incessantly in my office and at my bedside with grave news from the provinces. In Linz, Graz, Klagenfurt, Innsbruck and many other centres the Nazi storm-troopers had gone over from shouting to open violence, and had had many clashes with members of the Fatherland Front. Troops and bombing planes were again sent to Graz. The police everywhere did too little or nothing at all.

The morning of Austria’s last day dawned bright and sunny. The streets were full of a new activity—the preparations for Sunday’s plebiscite. Overhead aeroplanes circled lazily, dropping hundreds of thousands of propaganda leaflets, calling on Austrians to say “Yes” to the question of whether their country had the desire to live. Around the Ringstrasse, down

the Kärntnerstrasse and the Graben I followed in a taxi long columns of motor-lorries, filled with enthusiastic men and women wearing the red-white-red ribbon of Austria, or with the uniformed *Oesterreichische Jungvolk*, the national youth organisation of the country. They displayed banners with patriotic slogans, and scattered enormous quantities of leaflets. The strong breeze caught them up and held them quivering against the railings of the Hofburg and the bare branches of the trees around the Ringstrasse, until the city seemed to have been visited by some strange white blossoming. Patriotic enthusiasm had risen to a pitch far above that even of the day before. The motor columns were greeted everywhere with waving handkerchiefs, cheers and shouts of encouragement. To-day there were many more Three-Arrow men on the streets; Socialists and Clericals greeted one another as allies, each after his own fashion, across the gulf of four wasted years. Unity was in the air at last—and victory. The somewhat stilted greeting of “*Oesterreich!*”, which Dollfuss had invented for his followers, suddenly sounded natural and spontaneous as it rang through the streets between perfect strangers. From the radio came gay and patriotic music; for the moment the clouds seemed to have lifted as this atmosphere of national rejoicing in the coming struggle succeeded that of inactivity and fear. Suddenly the gay Viennese music broke off for an announcement:

“All unmarried reservists of the 1915 class with at least ten months’ service”, came the words, which were repeated at intervals until late in the afternoon, “will report immediately for duty”.

The explanation which followed did not disguise the ominous character of the summons. The reinforcements were needed, it was said, to insure the preservation of perfect order for Sunday’s plebiscite. I knew, of course, that this meant that a Nazi Putsch or a German invasion—if not both—were expected on or before Sunday. By 2 p.m. the gay propaganda motor columns had been replaced by others of sterner aspect—lorry after lorry filled with steel-helmeted troops with full war equipment began to stream out of the city.

Over a hasty lunch I remarked on the most disquieting feature of all. “Something very serious is afoot,” I said. “There is not a single disguised storm-trooper to be seen on the Kärntnerstrasse this morning—hardly a Swastika badge. The Nazis one

sees to-day are just hangers-on—people who think they are going with the tide. With these people any half-dozen police could deal. The real Nazis have gone to ground and I don't like it."

Within two hours I had the incredible explanation—a German ultimatum. Germany would not tolerate that the Austrian people should answer Schuschnigg's question—"Are you for an independent Austria?" Unless the plebiscite was called off, Austria would be invaded. This, then, was the meaning of the radio broadcast and of the troop movements. Schuschnigg was going to resist.

It was a hard job reducing the sudden flood of rumours to hard facts. One thing was certain—that an ultimatum had been delivered to the above effect at 10 a.m., brought by the man Dr. Schuschnigg had appointed Minister of the Interior in 1936, General Glaise von Horstenau, from Berlin, and delivered to him by his present Minister of Security, Seyss-Inquart. It was at 10.30 that the first broadcast summons for the reservists had been issued. So Schuschnigg was showing fight. Then I learned that von Papen, who had resigned his Vienna post a week before, had arrived on an unknown mission the previous evening. Official quarters denied even the receipt of the ultimatum, which Schuschnigg was to confirm over the radio that night. It was the first ultimatum of three sent that day and the second delivered by Hitler. [An earlier one still had formed the basis of his threats in Berchtesgaden to Schuschnigg, that unless he accepted all demands made to him, he (Hitler) would give the order to General von Reichenau to invade Austria.] The first ultimatum of March 11th, threatening invasion if the Chancellor persisted in taking the verdict of the people of Austria on the question of the country's independence—a question, be it remembered, to which Hitler himself had answered "*Ja*" in July 1936 and by implication again in his Reichstag speech of February 20th, 1938—was ignored by Schuschnigg, and the plebiscite propaganda was continued throughout the country until at least 3 p.m. Glaise-Horstenau, the distinguished bearer of the ultimatum from a foreign Chancellor to his own Chancellor, has since declared that Schuschnigg offered at last to consent to making the plebiscite one whereat a vote could be recorded against himself without rejecting the independence of Austria. He offered to put two questions to the electors: "Are you for the independence of Austria with Schuschnigg—yes or no? Are

you for the independence of Austria without Schuschnigg—yes or no? ” This offer was rejected. At 1 p.m. Schuschnigg was handed a document from Glaise-Horstenau and Seyss-Inquart embodying the already delivered German verbal ultimatum and fixing four o'clock as the time by which he had to have agreed to postpone the plebiscite under pain of invasion from Germany. Schuschnigg summoned a Cabinet Council for two o'clock, and at ten minutes to three—it is the Austrian Nazi Gauleiter Rainer who fixes the time—informed his two traitor Ministers, who had now thrown off all disguise and were acting openly as the diplomatic representatives of the Power which was bullying him, that he agreed to cancel the plebiscite on Sunday. As had happened ever since the inception of the movement, the yielding to Nazi demands merely emboldened fresh aggression.

Now the resignation of Schuschnigg was demanded if the invasion was to be postponed. Schuschnigg resigned; President Miklas refused to accept a resignation made under foreign threats. Before 4 p.m. came a new ultimatum from Germany conveyed by the Führer's confidant, Secretary of State Keppler, who flew straight to Vienna from seeing Hitler. He confronted Schuschnigg with a third—this time a written—ultimatum, the terms of which constituted a still more outrageous interference in the internal affairs of an independent country. Repeating the threat of invasion, the ultimatum demanded the cancellation of the intended plebiscite, the resignation of Schuschnigg and the appointing by Miklas of a full Nazi Cabinet under Seyss-Inquart. This ultimatum was indignantly rejected by President Miklas. At four o'clock came the fourth and final ultimatum, conveyed in duplicate to Schuschnigg and Miklas on the direct orders of Goering by General Muff, who was accredited to the Austrian Government as German Military Attaché in Vienna. It fixed a time limit of 7.30. Unless by that time the demands previously made had been accepted, an army of 200,000 men already massed at the frontier to invade Austria would cross it. Miklas' immediate reply was an indignant refusal: “ I will yield to personal violence at once, I will let myself be overthrown by violence as President of this country, but I will not do what you demand from me—change my Government under threat of a foreign invasion. I will not violate my Constitutional oath.” But by 7 p.m. the whole world knew that Schuschnigg and Miklas had bowed to force and accepted the terms of the ultimatum.

The Nazi Government subsequently denied that there ever had been an ultimatum. It is true that if one party accepts the terms of an ultimatum delivered by an enemy, the enemy is bound in honour to refrain from carrying out the threats in face of which the other has yielded. The Nazis have never considered themselves bound by even the most solemn engagement. Despite Schuschnigg's yielding, the invasion, of course, took place, because Hitler and his advisers well knew that the Austrian Nazi minority could not ever have formed a Government, let alone ruled for three days, without a foreign invasion designed first to instal their puppet regime and then to overthrow it in favour of the full annexation planned from the start. To this extent only—the failure by the German Nazis to observe even such decencies as are applied when a small nation yields to the bullying of a great one—they are, perhaps, entitled to say that there was “no ultimatum”.

Between 4 and 6 p.m. one could feel the political thunderclouds thickening almost every minute. The air—and the telephone lines—were full of rumours of invasion, of a Putsch in the provinces, of police treachery in Vienna, of fighting between Austrian and German troops on the frontier. Once again, and for the last time, Schuschnigg had confused the masses. The propaganda for the plebiscite had ceased very abruptly just after 3 o'clock, and there had been no explanation. I decided to go out and get at least a picture of what was happening in the streets. On the Graben there was desultory shouting of “*Heil Hitler!*” and “*Heil Schuschnigg!*” from small hostile bodies. Around the Café de l'Europe on the Stephansplatz, which had become a Nazi headquarters frequented by Tavs and other conspirators, the square was black with Nazis frenziedly howling. But it was easy to see that these were only hangers-on of the movement. The unmistakable secret storm-troopers and S.S., with their brutal faces and wild-eyed fanaticism combined with military discipline, were still nowhere to be seen. The police looked strange, standing about in knots and discussing something. I was certain that late in the night—probably about 4 a.m.—Nazis and traitor police would attempt a *coup d'état*. I bought the first—and last—issue of a Socialist newspaper to be sold legally in Vienna for four years. It contained the summons of the “R.S.-ler” to the workers to vote “*Ja*” on Sunday. I stuffed it into my pocket and took a taxi up the Kärntnerstrasse to have a look at the two main centres of conspiracy—the German



Travel Bureau opposite the Opera House and the German Legation in the Metternichgasse. Of the former I could see nothing through the dense masses of howling Nazi dervishes which surrounded it, save that before the portrait of Hitler there was a great pile of floral offerings. Gigantic Swastika banners (alternating in accordance with law with the Austrian banners) reached down from the roof to the street. A double cordon of police protected the demonstrators against any patriotic counter-demonstrations.

It was clear that conspiracy was causing the authority of the State to totter so that any moment might see it collapse. There were no crowds outside the German Legation but a heavy police guard and a constant coming and going of automobiles and motorcyclists. On the Schwarzenbergplatz I had noticed some unusual motor traffic in the direction of the East station and the high-road to Bratislava. A few people—terribly few—had got wind in time of the terror which, though I did not yet know it, was to burst over Vienna in half an hour and to continue unbroken up till to-day. These were the very first fugitives. Among them were Zernatto, Secretary-General of the Fatherland Front, the slippery Stockinger, friend of Dollfuss, now a very wealthy man, two Habsburg children Adelheid and Felix Franz, and Dollfuss' widow, whom the French Legation had taken under its protection. Zernatto, an ambitious poet who once dreamed of succeeding Schuschnigg as Chancellor, had cleared off early in the afternoon. Before going he handed over to his Secretary the Plebiscite Fund, saying: "This is to be placed at the disposal of the future rulers of Austria on condition that they admit publicly that we did not take it abroad but left it for them". The Nazis, of course, took the money—a million Schilling—but never fulfilled the condition.

At the American Legation I looked in to compare notes. The Chargé, John Wiley, was out, but was expected back at any minute. He came in soon, all his accustomed joviality gone, with an expression as grave as I have seen on any man's face. I told him some of my news and asked him which of the rumours he could confirm. He said, "I'm pledged to say nothing whatever. Sit down and listen to the radio. In a very few minutes now you'll know all that I know." Then I knew that I was about to hear broadcast the end of Austria. But still I had no idea that it was going to be an end accompanied by the outrage of a foreign invasion piled on top of local Nazi terror.

And then some lilting Viennese tune stopped abruptly, and a



tremulous voice said : " Listen ! Attention ! In a few moments you will hear an extremely important announcement." The metronome ticked on for another tense three minutes. Then, unIntroduced, came for the last time the voice of Austria's last Chancellor, to announce with an emotion which he only just managed to control until the end, his own downfall and the rape of his little country by mighty Germany. At the time, no one knew where this speech (which I have quoted on page 10 of this book) was delivered. It was read by Schuschnigg from a scrap of paper on which he had hurriedly pencilled the wording in the Cabinet room of the Chancellery on the Ballhausplatz, his whole Cabinet, including Seyss-Inquart and Glaise-Horstenau, standing around him. As he finished, he controlled his emotions one moment longer while the loyal Ministers sent softly over the ether for the last time the slogan of Dollfuss and Schuschnigg—the name of the murdered country—" *Oesterreich !* "—until the signal showed that Radio Vienna had switched back to the studio. Then, at last, Schuschnigg's indomitable courage yielded for a moment to the accumulated agonies of the last four weeks and he burst into tears, sobbing aloud, as two of his loyal Ministers caught him in their arms and guided him into a chair. Seyss and Glaise turned their back on the scene and conferred together in the embrasure of a window. In five minutes the ex-Chancellor had pulled himself together again and his worried colleagues handed him his hat and coat, telling him to hasten down the backstairs to his car, which they had ordered to wait at the side entrance. Even before his speech ended, Nazi storm-troopers had left their places of concealment and one *Sturmbann* was even now marching from the Kohlmarkt, where they had been concealed all the afternoon, towards the Chancellery—had probably already reached it. Schuschnigg returned :

" I leave by the main staircase, as I first entered this building. Please have the car brought there at once."

He got in, accompanied by his adjutant, Lieutenant Bartl. Two officers, loaded revolvers in hand, leapt on to the running-boards, shouting to the chauffeur : " Aspern, Aspern—hell for leather ! " (At Aspern aerodrome the air force had been holding a military aeroplane with engines running to bring Schuschnigg to safety.) White but set-lipped Schuschnigg said to the officers quietly : " No, no—I do not run away. My place is here in Austria. Please let me give the orders—to my own

chauffeur at least." Then, turning to the man who had driven him on more than one dangerous errand, he said quietly, as though returning from the Opera: "Home, Franzl, please". Hot on his heels came his friend Seyss-Inquart to the Belvedere where Schuschnigg lived, to tell him that "for his own protection" he was under arrest and in the guardianship of a hundred storm-troopers who, with rifles and machine-guns, were immediately posted inside and around the building.

Within ten minutes of Schuschnigg's farewell of "God protect Austria" I was speeding back in a taxi towards my office. Down the Rennweg marched, wholly ignorant of the events of the last quarter of an hour, a column of members of the Fatherland Front and workers carrying its banners on a propaganda march for the plebiscite. As they came level with the police station, a dozen police rushed out and the inspector shouted: "Halt! Who is the leader of this procession?" The Fatherland Front official at the head stepped forward proudly, and smiling happily, said: "I am, Herr Inspektor". Without a word the inspector drew his truncheon and hit him full across the face. As the man dropped, his face streaming blood and writhing in agony, the whole mob of police traitors, with screams of "Heil Hitler!" charged into the procession of men, women and children—incidentally they included friends of mine—who scattered terror-stricken under the hail of truncheon blows.

On the Schwarzenbergplatz huge cheering crowds were gathering under what in the dusk looked like a red flag. For a moment I thought that after all Schuschnigg had given some timely warning and there was to be resistance by the masses to the terror which had begun within ten minutes of his last speech. I stopped my taxi and ran over to join the crowd. Even as I heard the voice of the speaker in snarling triumph, "And now Schuschnigg and his Jewish Catholic pack of traitors are going to pay", I saw the angry contortions of the Swastika on the scarlet of the flag and realised that even that hope was over. As I passed the German Tourist Bureau, the Austrian flags had already been torn down and replaced by other Swastika banners held in readiness. I stopped my taxi at the Habsburgergasse to see that all was well at home, for we had two hundred of Schuschnigg's Schutzkorps men in the basement, and they would be among the first objects of Nazi vengeance. There was a strong smell of burning paper—someone had had the presence of mind to thrust the membership lists into the furnace. In their quarters the Schutzkorps boys

were standing half naked or entirely naked, many of them crying, while Nazi police, who had hastily pulled on their Swastika armbands to mark their treachery, abused and ill-treated them. Prison vans drew up at the door. One boy, stripped of his uniform, appealed to me for something to wear, and my winter overcoat and a pair of trousers disappeared into prison with him. Upstairs in my flat I found Mrs. Philips Price, wife of the British Labour M.P., and her daughter having tea. She was just on the point of arranging for the daughter to stay with an Austrian family to learn the language.

"Get into my taxi downstairs," I said, "drive straight to your hotel and catch the first train home." She looked at me incredulously. "You really think things are so bad?" she asked. "I know that they are," I replied. "This is the Nazi revolution which has been in preparation for five years, and Vienna is going to become a place of such bestial horror and cruelty that it will be no place where any English man or woman can be happy as long as this horrible regime lasts. You have just time to reach your hotel before the full storm bursts and the mob I have just passed in the Kärntnerstrasse reaches this street." She pluckily refused my offer of escort—made, I am afraid, none too pressingly, for I had perhaps the biggest story of my life to tackle that night—and left.

As I crossed the Graben to my office, the Brown flood was sweeping through the streets. It was an indescribable witches' sabbath—storm-troopers, lots of them barely out of the school-room, with cartridge-belts and carbines, the only other evidence of authority being Swastika brassards, were marching side by side with police turncoats, men and women shrieking or crying hysterically the name of their leader, embracing the police and dragging them along in the swirling stream of humanity, motor-lorries filled with storm-troopers clutching their long-concealed weapons, hooting furiously, trying to make themselves heard above the din, men and women leaping, shouting and dancing in the light of the smoking torches which soon began to make their appearance, the air filled with a pandemonium of sound in which intermingled screams of:

"Down with the Jews! *Heil Hitler!* *Heil Hitler!* *Sieg Heil!* Perish the Jews! Hang Schuschnigg! *Heil Seyss-Inquart!* *Heil Planetta!* [the murderer of Dollfuss], Down with the Catholics! *Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer!*" to which was now added a fourth ready-learned slogan "*Ein Sieg!*" making

the whole incantation : " One People, one Reich, one Leader and one Victory ! "

Fragments of the Horst Wessel song struggled above one's head for survival against the strains of " To-day we have all Germany, to-morrow we have the world " and " *Deutschland über Alles* ".

Until long after 3 a.m. the streets of Vienna were an inferno. As I walked through or drove past the mobs whose faces called for the pencil of a Gustav Doré, one of the many sentimental phrases applied by the Viennese to themselves mockingly halted my brain — " *Das gold'ne Wiener Herz* ". There was little trace of golden hearts written on these hate-filled, triumph-drunken faces, and the memory of it makes one's stomach queasy. When the tumult and the shouting began to die, I drove through the Leopoldstadt, the Jewish quarter, through which howling mobs, comprising perhaps 80,000 to 100,000 of Vienna's population of 2,000,000, had been marching for hours. I expected to find the place a wreckage. I was agreeably surprised to be able to detect only one broken window, and promptly gave the Nazis a good mark in my last dispatch. After all, perhaps the famous Viennese good nature was going to modify even the savagery of Nazi doctrines.

How green I was concerning the calculated bestiality of this creed ! Of course one does not wreck, burn and destroy that property of which one is going to strip the owners down to the last farthing. Nor does the sanctimonious plunderer like to furnish optical proof of his misdeeds to an occasionally censorious world. These, and these alone, were the reasons why there was little destruction of property on this night. But during it, as I soon discovered, the wholesale plundering by armed bands of Nazis of the Jews in their homes had set in. Any dawning illusions on my part as to a possible modification of Nazi cruelties to the Jews should have been dispelled when my taxi had to wait at one corner while the tail-end of the Nazi mob surged past.

" Who dares to ride in a taxi to-night when he should be jubilating with us ? " a blonde, blowsy, hell-cat of a woman suddenly screamed out, trying to peer into the darkness of the cab. " That must be a Jewish swine. Door open and spit in his face ! " A dozen hands reached for the door, and I pulled out of my pocket that part of an orthodox fisherman's equipment known as a " priest ", which I had been carrying round with me during the last week in case of emergency. But at this moment the crowd surged on, and my taxi-driver quietened the female fury with the remark drawled in broad Viennese dialect : " *Na,*

na. *Zufällig is des a Arier, und a Ausländer a no dazua!*” (“Now, now, this happens to be an ‘Aryan’, and a foreigner at that!”) Was this the *gold’ne Wiener Herz*, perhaps? I am afraid it was only the very practical Viennese respect for money, for the clock had ticked up a pretty good round sum, and by the time the spitting and anything else the mob cared to do with me were finished, there might not have been much left to pay the bill.

Inside the Chancellery Miklas had long maintained his refusal to yield to the threats of Seyss-Inquart, Guido Schmidt, Glaise-Horstenau, Rainer and Globocnik (to-day *Gauleiter* of Vienna), and appoint a Nazi Chancellor. It was Rainer who left the Chancellery and gave orders for 6000 storm-troopers and 800 S.S. to surround it, many of them, he proudly says, people who had taken part in the Dollfuss assassination and Putsch in July 1934. At 8.30 Rainer and Seyss-Inquart gave orders for the storm-troopers to seize all public buildings.

Outside the Chancellery gathered a mob of nearly 100,000. The guards flung to and bolted the great doors. Storm-troopers swarmed on ladders up the front of the building, leapt on to the balcony, burst open the French windows and made prisoners of the Ministers. Others were admitted by secret Nazis among the guard and flung open again the great main gates. When Rainer re-entered the Chancellery at 9 p.m., he had to climb over the machine-guns of the Nazi revolutionaries who were already in possession. Miklas was held a prisoner, while his captors continued to insist on his appointing Seyss-Inquart. At 10 p.m. Nazis stormed into the Broadcasting Centre—among them, of course, men who had been bombed out of it during the 1934 Putsch. At the Fatherland Front headquarters in the prolongation of the Graben, Am Hof, the mob had smashed down all the “Dollfuss Crosses”, the badge of the movement. At 8.20 Seyss-Inquart had spoken on the radio after the announcer had declared “The Federal Chancellor Seyss-Inquart will now make an important statement”.

The announcer lied—there was no Federal Chancellor Seyss-Inquart, for it was certainly not until 11 p.m. that Miklas bowed to fate and Seyss-Inquart took a fresh oath of “loyalty” to the State which he had already destroyed, and to the head of it, who was his prisoner. Whether, indeed, Miklas ever yielded, no one knows. The lie had its purpose, for in his declaration Seyss-Inquart said that “there must be no resistance to the German army, which is now entering the country”. And on the following

day the German official news-agency published the absolutely untruthful statement that "Chancellor" Seyss-Inquart had cabled to the German Government to send troops to maintain order against "the armed Socialists and Communists". No such telegram was ever sent. The Nazis have been challenged publicly to produce a record of it and have failed. Even had it been sent, it would furnish no justification for a German invasion, for the first invading troops crossed the Austrian frontier between 9 and 9.5 p.m.—two hours before Seyss-Inquart became Chancellor and therefore acquired a claim to ask for foreign intervention. Seyss-Inquart later told the correspondent of the Paris journal that "Socialists and Communists in Vienna had made bloody attacks of which Nazis were the victims". Another falsification. After their triumph all my Nazi acquaintances came to me with this lie. I asked them to produce one single wounded Nazi and I would believe, if they liked, in the massacre of 2000 of their innocents by ravening Reds. Not one, of course, could be produced. Herr Hitler himself has been good enough to support Dr. Schuschnigg's last declaration, that the stories of workers' disorders "were lies from A to Z", against Seyss-Inquart's lie in his Reichstag speech of March 18th in which the Reichskanzler declared that not a single shot had fallen or a single victim been made. Seyss-Inquart's warning against resistance to the German invaders, given first at 8.15, was repeated at frequent intervals up till 2 a.m., because he knew that from 9 p.m. onwards there was a constant danger of such collision. And during the night began a far more terrible invasion for the people of Austria than even that of the German army, and one which neither Seyss-Inquart nor Hitler attempted to explain or justify. Together with Himmler, all the heads of the dreaded Gestapo or Secret Police left Berlin and Munich that night by plane, and at 5 a.m. were in Vienna to instigate and supervise the coming terror.

The last State document to which Schuschnigg put his signature was published in the Official Gazette (when it had been already two days in the hands of the Nazis) on Sunday, March 13th. It was the acceptance by Miklas of Schuschnigg's resignation and declared that "the Federal President has addressed the following letter to Schuschnigg: 'In accordance with Article 86 of the Constitution, I accept your resignation as Chancellor and remove you *together with all other Ministers* and all other Secretaries of State from your offices'." Thus Seyss-



Inquart was not a Minister of any kind and had no public function whatever until 11 p.m. Herr Hitler's statement in his proclamation of March 12th, that "since this morning there are marching over all the frontiers of German Austria the soldiers of the German army, armoured cars, infantry divisions and S.S. organisations, while the German air arm flies beneath the blue sky, summoned by the new Nationalist Socialist Government in Vienna itself", will not hold water. For the invasion did not begin, as Hitler says, on the morning of March 12th, but on the night of March 11th, as both Schuschnigg and Seyss-Inquart had warned the population that it would. Nor did the invaders come "on the invitation of the new National Socialist Government in Austria". There is abundant evidence that by midday they were already on the march to the frontier and that they crossed it two hours before any National Socialist Government was formed. The German invasion came to put into power the nominees of Herr Hitler, who were too weak a minority to achieve it by themselves, and to terrorise the Austrian majority out of any attempt to resist subjugation and annexation.

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In the hush which succeeded Schuschnigg's last words, "God protect Austria", and as the last soft notes of the National Anthem faded, the curtain came down with a run. Behind the curtain actors and supers in the drama which had ended so abruptly, the Tragedy of Austria, fled pell-mell towards the exits. They were blocked by the shouting hordes of those who had cast themselves for the best parts in the new piece which started that very night and is still running, Austria's Agony. Struggling, thrusting, fighting their impatient way into the limelight for which they had waited so long, the new actors drove their broken predecessors back on to the stage, forcing into their trembling hands the parts they must now play in prisons, concentration camps, torture chambers, ghettos and cemeteries. On that drama the curtain has not yet risen—will never rise until another play is ready to be put on—Austria's Liberation. But from the front row of stalls, through a hole here and there in the curtain of false news, propaganda and suppression, let us now try to catch just a glimpse here and there of what is going on behind—of odd scenes from Austria's Agony.



## CHAPTER XXVI

### TERROR UNCHAINED

THE NIGHT EXPRESS FROM VIENNA TO PRAGUE LEAVES THE East Station at 11.15, and does not stop until, at forty minutes after twelve, it reaches Czechoslovak soil, at Breclav. By eight o'clock on the night of March 11th, the seething crowd of fugitives on the platform already sufficed to fill every seat and every foot of standing-room. By his bold blow to save Austria in announcing the plebiscite, Schuschnigg had arrested the wave of emigration which was about to set in from the doomed country. Trunks had been left standing half-packed, money sent abroad recalled and early *émigrés* had even returned to throw themselves whole-heartedly into the fight for independence. By failing to order resistance to the invader, Schuschnigg believed he was avoiding the shedding of blood. But by so doing he deprived his most devoted supporters, those who for years had exposed themselves in the fight against Nazism, of all warning—even of a few hours—in which to seek safety in flight.

The *sauve-qui-peut* which set in as his farewell speech ended was practically hopeless. All roads to the frontier were jammed with fleeing taxicabs and motor-cars. At the aerodrome and the stations a medley of princes, peasants and paupers, world-famous bankers, obscure proletarians, Jews from the highest rank to the lowliest, army officers, police officials and the Communists and Socialists they had arrested and punished, Catholic priests, civil servants and journalists desperately tried to find places on the departing train. The wiser fugitives who could face exposure to the elements were trickling into the woods on foot and towards the mountain passes, in the hope of reaching safety by irregular routes.

At the East Station they filled one train, made as long as engines could push and pull to the frontier, and then another. The passengers clamoured for an early start, but on the railways, as everywhere else, there were Nazi traitors, and the tears of the women and curses of the men went unheeded. Then came the

first storm-troopers, half uniformed, half armed, but all with the dreaded Swastika brassard, flushed with triumph, hoarse with shouting and thirsting for vengeance. They went through the trains with a fine-toothed comb and dog-whips—men, women and children were dragged out and herded off to prison. Those who remained were plundered quite openly of everything in their possession—money, jewellery, watches and furs. At last, after hours of agony, the trembling survivors found themselves slowly moving off towards Breclav and safety.

Their ordeal had but begun. After twenty minutes the train stopped abruptly in open country. Out of the darkness flamed torches and lanterns as squads of storm-troopers swarmed into the train, guarding the doors, and forced the engine-driver to return to Vienna. Here the search started anew, and more helpless victims were removed. At last this too was over, and those who had survived this second ordeal started the journey afresh. The long, crowded train moved slowly, and every moment was an agony for those who feared to be held up again. But at last they could see the lights of Breclav and the train stopped on Czechoslovak territory. There were still Austrian customs and passport officials—already with Swastika armlets—to be faced, but they were practically powerless here.

Then came the Czechoslovak examination. "All persons with Austrian passports get out and go to the waiting-room", came the order. With some uneasiness the Austrians complied. At the door stood Czechoslovak police, who let them in—and kept them there. There was a long wait—then through the windows they saw their train move off towards Prague. The Chief of Police entered and called out: "An order of the Ministry of the Interior has just reached me to the effect that without exception all Austrians are to be turned back at the frontier. You must all wait here and go back on the next train." One of those who was there and managed by a ruse to escape told me later in Prague that the scenes which followed this announcement were too painful for him to recall. Among these fugitives were very many whose lives were in danger. Several whose names I know went practically straight from here to Dachau. Many had influential friends—some Cabinet Ministers—in the country on whose soil they stood until the next train left for Vienna—and asked to be allowed to telephone them. This was refused. That Czechoslovakia, herself in

deadly peril from Germany, could not absorb the hundreds of thousands of fugitives from Austria was clear. But this inexorable refusal of political asylum to individuals in deadly danger was a cruel action which the democratic Czechoslovaks who know of it still deeply regret. It was due partly to the rigidity of the order issued by Dr. Czerny, the Minister concerned, partly to the unbending bureaucratic stiffness with which for the first few hours it was administered. I know myself of very many cases where subsequently asylum and assistance were given to individuals where it was a question of something like life or death. Later the frontiers were closed strictly to ordinary *émigrés*, but, even so, anyone who reached Czechoslovak soil and surrendered to the police, if he could prove himself in danger, was indeed arrested and later expelled, but to any country he selected. All other surrounding countries closed their frontiers immediately and permanently, making no exceptions whatever. The Nazis rubbed their hands. Now no one could deprive them of the sport in store.

Next day the Nazi Press gleefully reported the scenes of terror at the East Station and the stopping of the train, telling with delight of the strings of motor-cars abandoned at the frontier by those who had fled through the woods rather than be delayed for a passport examination and risk arrest. Much later I met a famous publicist who had been on this 11.15 train. Some of the fugitives, he said, got off at the first Austrian station on their way back to Vienna and took to the woods. One of these whom I met in Prague reached safety after four days and nights of exposure and fear. My friend's health would not have stood this, and he was forced to return to Vienna. The whole train-load were locked into a waiting-room and kept there, standing unless they could find floor-space to sit, for twelve hours. Then they were examined, some imprisoned, some released. My friend was among the latter. Not daring to return home, he disappeared for a few days, and then took train for Italy, with no idea that the Italians also would refuse him. En route, ill as he was, he was dragged from the train at a station in Carinthia and arrested on a charge of smuggling money—in a back pocket of his note-case a Nazi had found one long-forgotten five-schilling note which had been invalid since the date, five years before, when such notes were replaced by silver currency. An added offence was what his captors called " Jewish insolence "

consisting in having a visiting-card printed in Gothic characters. By some miracle he was unidentified and released again after some weeks, going into hiding in a tiny village of the Vienna forest. At last, by means which I must not disclose, he reached safety and eventually a committee-room of the House of Commons, where he tried to make a number of Conservative members understand what is going on in the vast prison camp which Austria for more than half its population has become.

In Vienna and the provinces plundering, too, started that night. For years the Nazis of every district—almost of every street in the capital—had had ready their proscription lists of those who would best repay house searches. Nearly every Consulate in Vienna is in possession of the details of hundreds of fully authenticated cases illustrating how this private plundering was carried out unchecked for many weeks. I know myself of cases where it was done with cynical courtesy, of others with the utmost brutality, including the wanton wrecking of furniture, shooting up of mirrors and smashing of paintings. The great palace of Baron Louis Rothschild—General Spears has written of how Louis Rothschild's pass was torn in pieces and flung in his face when he tried to leave from Aspern aerodrome—was quite systematically plundered of all its art treasures. Far worse was the plundering of the humbler Jews. I know so many who made it a rule to keep always a considerable sum of money in the house ready to hand over to the plunder gangs, in the hope of escaping arrest. Jewellery, furs and even furniture were all acceptable. All motor-cars without exception, of course, were immediately stolen from their Jewish owners, the plunderers demanding at the same time either a lump sum or regular contributions "to buy petrol". One optimistic Jew I knew, thinking that one day he might get his own car back, volunteered to act as chauffeur for several weeks to the gang which took it. The offer was accepted on condition that he provided them with all the food, drink and luxuries they required to enable them to perform their "duties". The most cynical aspect of this plunder system was the way in which the police and the Nazi authorities covered it up by orders of the day and communiqués to the Press. When, despite the terror, all Vienna was whispering of the free rein given to plundering storm-troopers, communiqués were issued by the police warning the public that "Communists" in storm-troopers' uniforms were

making "illegal requisitions", and stating that the police should be informed immediately of any cases where this was attempted. Any Jews naïve enough to take this seriously found one of several things happening.

In some cases the exchange refused to answer their telephone call, in others the reply from the police station, when they had explained what was going on, was that all the police were out and that only a caretaker was on the line. If they went in person and complained to the police, they were lucky if they escaped arrest or physical violence. But the newspapers continued to publish police warnings and *Gauleiter* Bürckel's threats of punishment of plunderers. In one case which I knew of personally the Nazis came on two occasions with motor-lorries to remove everything, including money, from the flat. When the lady of the house tried to get the police on the telephone, the exchange did not answer. She observed that when one of the plunderers wished to telephone for more lorries, he first dialled a secret number and gave a password, after which he was able to get any connections he wanted. In another case within my personal knowledge the Nazis came to a well-known shopkeeper and called upon him to open his safe, which he did, and they took the money. Five years before, when the Nazi agitation first became alarming, he had had a safe built secretly into the wall. Four years after that he had changed the position of this secret safe. Having ransacked the unconcealed safe, the Nazis, without asking questions, walked straight to the corner where the safe had been built in five years before, and tapped the wall, saying: "And now open this one". When the shopkeeper told him that it had been moved a year before, and opened it, the Nazi seemed quite annoyed. "We never heard of your moving it", he said. "I will see that someone pays for this carelessness."

A few days after the Nazi triumph I passed through the Taborstrasse in the Jewish quarter of Vienna. Outside a big Jewish store stood a long string of lorries into which storm-troopers were pitching all kinds of millinery goods as they took them from the shop. Police stood by to see that they were not interfered with in the work of plunder and moved on the curious. There was nothing remarkable in this—it was just one incident which I happened to see myself among thousands. This was private plunder—for some reason considered more reprehensible than the systematic plundering by the Nazi organisation as such

which stole Jewish businesses, some of which had been built up slowly for generations, and ruined some of them in a few months. Amidst all the horrors to which Austrian Jews, Austrian patriots and Austrian democrats—in fact, all non-Nazis—have been exposed ever since March 11th, the loss of every remedy against theft and plunder is the least. After a few days I do not think I heard any complaints or anxieties expressed by Jews on this score; it was just accepted as inevitable.

Much more terrible was the acceptance of suicide as a perfectly normal and natural incident by every Jewish household. It is quite impossible to convey to anyone outside Austria in how matter-of-fact a way the Jews of Austria to-day refer to this way out of their agony. When I say one's Jewish friends spoke to one of their intention to commit suicide with no more emotion than they had formerly talked of making an hour's journey by train, I cannot expect to be believed. Nevertheless, the fact must be recorded. It is not your fault that you cannot believe me, because it is impossible for you to conceive of the diseased and degenerate mentality which lies behind the pathological Anti-Semitism of the Nazis. Therefore it is impossible for you to imagine what it means for one-sixth of the population of Vienna to be made pariahs over-night, deprived of all civil rights, including the right to retain property large or small, the right to be employed or to give employment, to exercise a profession, to enter restaurants, cafés, bathing beaches, baths or public parks, to be faced daily and hourly, without hope of relief, with the foulest insults which ingenious and vicious minds can devise, to be liable always to be turned overnight out of house and home, and at any hour of every day and every night to arrest without the pretence of a charge or hope of a definite sentence, however heavy—and with all this to find every country in the world selfishly closing its frontiers to you when, after being plundered of your last farthing, you seek to escape. For most of the non-Jewish victims of the Nazis, many of whom are now sharing the punishment of the Jews, there is a hope that one day the nightmare may pass. For the Jews there is none while the Nazis rule.

It is no fault of yours, but your very good fortune, that you cannot believe that one after another families are being turned out of their houses and herded into a ghetto merely because they are not of undiluted Teutonic blood, that in their thousands men and women are still being arrested, held in crowded cells

for months without the suggestion of any guilt or charge, and then called upon to sign a promise to leave the country forthwith or go to Dachau—knowing full well that there is not a country they can enter. You cannot believe the stories you read in your newspapers of Jewish families, after living for generations in Burgenland villages, being taken out to an island breakwater—children, old men and women, cripples of eighty and more, and very sick persons—and abandoned in the midst of a raging storm in the Danube, whose swirling, muddy brown waters lap their feet. It cannot make any real impression on your consciousness as things which are really happening daily and hourly—yes, at the very moment that you read these words in such comfort as they may leave you, a little less than you are accustomed to feel, I hope—to hear that these peasant or shop-keeping families were rescued, refused anywhere an asylum, and are to this day huddled together on an ancient vessel in mid-stream—as are others in filthy, desolate Alpine huts in a triangle of No-Man’s-Land between three countries and in the dank fields of Bohemia outside the new German frontiers—without a hope in the world of ever getting back to life. You will shrug your comfortable shoulders and say “Bogey tales” when I tell you of women whose husbands had been arrested a week before without any charge, receiving a small parcel from the Viennese postman with the curt intimation—“To pay, 150 Marks, for the cremation of your husband—ashes enclosed from Dachau”. The usual intimation is just a printed slip, a copy of which lies before me: “The relatives of —— are informed herewith that he died to-day at Dachau Concentration Camp. (Signed) STAPO HEAD-QUARTERS.” Or if I tell you of a professional man coming with ashen face and loose, quivering lips to the journalist he had often attended and babbling out: “Hide my son, hide him—last week they took my cousin’s boy to Dachau and sent back the ashes in an urn four days later”. I envy you, because you have not known any of these people as I have—they are not to you human beings as they are to me, but just part of a picture drawn in a book. You have never seen Nazis gloating over the daily suicide lists, you have not looked into the indescribably bestial pages of Julius Streicher’s *Der Stürmer*, or seen the slaving mouth of this scarlet-faced, bald-headed vulture beside whom I have more than once drunk beer in Munich and read his headlines above the stories of the suicides in Vienna: “Recommended as



an Example to Others". And so you do not need to feel the horror which I cannot escape as I remember that in all this we acquiesce, and soothe our consciences with a bottle of Evian water and a few more committees. I envy you—believe me, I envy you. But yesterday I was asked by an Englishman for the address of a cheap hotel in Vienna where he could spend his holidays—*holidays* in Austria, amidst all this! Him I did not envy.

Some of the horrors I saw at very close quarters. Hurrying down the stairs of my flat to hear Hitler make his first speech on his arrival in Vienna, I was delayed by men carrying out the bodies of a young Jewish doctor and his mother, who had lived, quiet, decent and hard-working neighbours for years, two floors below. The man had been dismissed from his hospital overnight without a hope of ever being allowed to earn another penny. Nazis had forced their way into his flat and thrust a great Swastika banner out of his window. Being a doctor, escape was easier for him and his mother than for most; they had found it through a hypodermic syringe. The S.S. guards in the basement premises, who had replaced Schuschnigg's Sturmkorps, stood around grinning their satisfaction as the bodies came out. From my window I could watch for many days how they would arrest Jewish passers-by—generally doctors, lawyers or merchants, for they preferred their victims to belong to the better educated classes—and force them to scrub, polish and beat carpets in the flat where the tragedy had taken place, insisting the while that the non-Jewish maid should sit at ease in a chair and look on. My street, the Habsburgergasse, was made a park for stolen Jewish cars, on which the S.S. had painted their dreaded insignia, "⚡". I could not enter or leave my house all the time I was in Vienna without having to witness the degrading spectacle of Jewish men of all social ranks and ages and Jewish ladies and young girls collected at random on the streets—every non-Jew wore the Swastika, so that they were easily recognised—doing press-gang labour, washing the cars stolen from their co-racials.

Mine proved a good centre, too, for watching the favourite amusement of the Nazi mobs during many long weeks of forcing Jewish men and women to go down on hands and knees and scrub the pavements with acid preparations which bit into the skin, obliging them to go straight to hospital for treatment. Under Dollfuss and Schuschnigg, in a certain number of cases when

Nazis were caught painting up the forbidden Swastika, they were made by the police to paint them over with black paint or to sweep up with a broom the paper Swastikas they scattered in the streets—a mild and appropriate measure which can hardly even be considered punishment. Apologists for the Nazis abroad have tried to draw a parallel between this and the pavement-washing inflicted on the Jews. The parallel is nonexistent. Whereas the Nazis were taken in the early hours of the morning, before many people were about, to remove the illegal propaganda which in defiance of the law they had themselves spread over-night, the Jews were now taken to the most-frequented streets at the hour when their humiliation would be greatest, and forced to remove all traces of the absolutely legal, electoral propaganda of the previous Government, with the preparation of which they had had nothing to do. As soon as Dr. Schuschnigg announced the plebiscite, the members of his youth organisation, as I saw myself, painted on the pavements, on Dr. Schuschnigg's instructions, the "Dollfuss Cross", or stencilled on walls the portrait of Schuschnigg. Now, day after day, Nazi storm-troopers, surrounded by jostling, jeering and laughing mobs of "golden Viennese hearts", dragged Jews from shops, offices and homes, men and women, put scrubbing-brushes in their hands, splashed them well with acid, and made them go down on their knees and scrub away for hours at the hopeless task of removing Schuschnigg propaganda. All this I could watch from my office window overlooking the Graben. (Where there was none available, I have seen Nazis painting it for the Jews to remove.) From time to time a roar of delight from the crowds would announce that the storm-troopers, saying mockingly, "Now you want more water", had sluiced their victim from a bucket of filthy water.

The first "cleaning squad" I saw was at the Praterstern in the Jewish quarter. It was employed on trying to wash off the stencilled portrait of Schuschnigg from the pediment of a statue. Through the delighted crowds storm-troopers dragged an aged Jewish working-man and his wife. With tears rolling silently down her cheeks, looking straight ahead and through her tormentors, the woman held her old husband's arm, and I could see her trying to pat his hand.

"Work for the Jews at last, work for the Jews!" the mob howled. "We thank our Führer for finding work for the Jews."

I caught a fragment of conversation of a burly Nazi, the admiring centre of a crowd of Prater prostitutes. . . . "Wearing a fur coat, if you please, one was, when we took her from the café, with polished finger-nails too. After the first hour of scrubbing I jerked her up to her feet and made her show those manicured hands to the crowd. I tell you, they were a nice sight ! It will be many a long month before she ventures to show those at a bridge-table again ! " Roars of laughter greeted this sally. " What about the fur coat ? " someone asked. " Oh, we made her keep that on—I told her I was afraid she would catch cold without it. And by the time the last bucket of water and acid went over that, it wouldn't have fetched ten schillings from any Jew in the Judengasse. But we let another fur-coated lady hang the coat up on a railing, and what do you think ? When we let her go, that fur coat had disappeared." There was another burst of delighted laughter.

Every morning in the Habsburgergasse the S.S. squads were told how many Jews to round up that day for menial tasks. Once a regular police detective came to my office in my absence to pour out his disgust at orders to " arrest fifty Jews to-day—any Jews ". The favourite task was that of cleaning the bowls of the w.c.s in the S.S. barracks, which the Jews were forced to do simply with their naked hands. One day in the Graben I saw an Englishwoman being dragged away from one of these degrading exhibitions by two friends, shouting, " Let me loose—I must stop it ". Fortunately for her, the Nazis did not understand. They were too intent on their enjoyment ; the well-known Plague Column in the Graben was black with happy onlookers.

One morning when I was terribly busy, I was called to the telephone and asked to come immediately to a certain foreign official building. The person who called me would in England be labelled Anti-Semitic ; that is, it was someone who would certainly have had no Jewish friends and would say rather vaguely that the Jews were an ill-mannered, pushing and none-too-honest race. Nevertheless, I had been summoned there to see and hear the story of two Jews. They were in a state of physical and mental collapse, having just escaped from the hell of the Seitenstaettengasse. The Seitenstaettengasse is a tiny, old-world, cobbled street just off the busy Rotenturmstrasse. In a tall, shabby building is the principal synagogue of Vienna,

together with the Jewish *Kultusgemeinde*—centre of the religious, cultural and charitable work of the Jews of the capital. Since early morning the building had been occupied by S.S. guards. To it were accustomed to come the Jewish poorest of the poor, to the soup-kitchens provided by the Jewish community. The S.S. had closed the soup-kitchen and stolen all the food supplies. Then they had issued special passes to enter the building to poor Jews who came in search of relief. The two to whom I spoke were among them. Once inside the building they were taken into the synagogue, where the S.S. lolled about, smoking pipes and cigarettes. The Jews were forced to perform “physical jerks”, knee bending and stretching, holding a chair in each hand. The older and feebler ones who stumbled or collapsed were brutally kicked and beaten by the Nazis.

What had completely broken up the two I was talking to was not the physical pain—they were young, had managed to do the exercises properly and had not themselves been struck—but the sacrilege which followed. They were forced to strap on their wrists the sacred *Tefillin* or praying-bands with the ten commandments, and therewith to scrub the floors and clean out the bowls of the lavatories. My Anti-Semitic informant was horror-stricken at the recital, and urged me to go down and see for myself what was happening. “For God’s sake write about these outrages—it is the only hope of getting them stopped. . . .” S.S. guards refused to admit me to the synagogue, whence came the sound of military commands and loud laughter. Here and there a victim would be flung out, grey-faced, with trembling limbs, eyes staring with horror and mouths they could not keep still. I watched how, for the amusement of the crowd, Jews were brought out, wearing the ceremonial top-hats and caps and the sacred biretta of the rabbis, and forced to sweep the streets of the rubbish which grinning storm-troopers kept throwing out of the windows. My Anti-Semitic friend’s hope that writing of these outrages would stop them proved vain. This story I did not seek to keep for myself—I put several colleagues on to it, and we all wrote it up, but the sacrilege continued long after. The only effect that this publicity had, to my knowledge, was that it had brought a little nearer the day of my expulsion.

The invading German troops took little part in the Jew-baiting and plundering which were a speciality of the Nazis, German and Austrian. Sometimes I saw them looking on with

amusement, but usually they paid no attention to it. Two Prussian officers one morning shouted to a former bookseller, a Jew whom I knew, with the unmistakable name of Cohen, to get into their car. Fearing the worst, he complied, but found they did not suspect his race, for they gave him money to show them the sights of the town. With ready audacity, the little Jew said as they passed a cleaning squad down on hands and knees: "So our Führer has found work for the Jews at last". He was delighted to hear them reply: "That's not work, it's a *Schweinerei*". It was just one of many signs of the dislike of the officer caste of the Reichswehr for their Nazi masters. On another occasion on the Neuer Markt I saw two officers kick over the bucket of two very old Jews who were scrubbing the pavements and tell them they could go, cursing the Nazi storm-troopers who were supervising. The explanation was that Himmler, the dreaded head of the Gestapo, was lodging in the hotel opposite; as the supreme authority over all concentration camps, he was known to have strong prejudices in favour of Jew-baiting being carried on always in decent privacy.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is the morning of March 12th, the first day of Nazi Austria. My telephone bell rings, and the voice of a stranger—a woman—says: "I must see you at once".

"Who is speaking?"

"Lieselotte."

I know no Lieselotte, but I can guess what the tremor in her voice means.

"Come up at once."

In ten minutes she is in the office—a shabby, intelligent-looking woman, who keeps her eyes glued on me like those of a dying believer on the Crucifix which is to prove his salvation. I ask her what is the matter, and she just breathes one name—"Wilder". Now I know everything. Wilder is one of the most brilliant underground Left workers, who was in a concentration camp until released at the same time as the Nazis under the last amnesty, and has since been negotiating with Schuschnigg's representatives. She is insistent that he must be got out of the country at once. I urge her to wait a little until the watch on the frontiers—where, I have learned already, are posted everywhere S.S. guards with telescopic sights on their rifles—shall have relaxed a little.

"Impossible," she says, "the Nazis are already on his trail—the hunt is up."

I asked her just how bad it is.

"If they catch him it means his life", she returns.

There is practically nothing to be done. Certain information which I have been given but told to reserve it for only the most desperate cases, I decide to impart to her. It may help. So may money—but before I can offer it, a wealthy American woman who happens to have called at the office insists on providing her share. In his case it seems well to make it a large sum. I buy her a ticket for the man to a foreign capital.

"My man told me to ask you for money," she said, "because although you do not even know his real name and he has himself no idea what will happen to him if he can escape the Nazis, he says you will know that he will some day find a way to pay you back if he lives."

I tell her to let Wilder know that I am quite sure of this, and she promises to come back on Monday and tell me whether he has escaped. I know that if she were alive and free she would have done so, but I have never heard of them again. She was only the first of many in this desperate plight.

There is really nothing one can try to help against the ring of steel enclosing this fair land turned prison. Those who need money to keep on the run can have it, but that is all one can do. With the money they take to the mountains, apparently as part of some gay ski-ing party, and search the Austrian Alps desperately for some loophole to escape—in almost every case in vain. When I leave Austria, the sister of one of these unhappy fugitives gives me a minute packet to take out for her with instructions as to how to make it harmless if I am searched.

"If my brother is still alive, someone will come to your hotel in Prague for it within a week of your arrival. If no one comes, then it is all over and you should destroy it unopened."

No one came, and I destroyed it long ago.

Schuschnigg's hope that by issuing orders to the Austrian army not to resist the invasion he would prevent the shedding of blood proved illusory from the start. What proportion of the deaths which when they had to be admitted were officially described as suicides, were in reality murders, can never be ascertained. In all parts of the city storm-troopers seized buildings, which they used as prisons. There is no means, and

probably never will be, of establishing just how some of the inmates died. One day an Englishwoman, who had lived for years in one of the wealthier suburbs looked in to my office to bid me a hasty good-bye.

"I don't know what will happen to my furniture. I am leaving everything. I must get out of this, or I shall go mad. Last night there were five shots fired in the garden of the villa in our street which the Nazis are using as a prison. The night before it was nine, the night before that seven. I lie awake now all night listening for the shots—sometimes there is only a few minutes' interval between them, sometimes it is hours."

On the day of Herr Hitler's triumphal entry into Vienna, the suicide rate rose to three figures, and the daily average did not sink below it for many weeks. Whenever it showed signs of slackening, some new order would be issued by the Nazis to stamp despair still deeper into the hearts of their victims. A Nazi order issued in July ordering the dismissal of all Jews from all employment, even Jewish, produced 800 attempted suicides, nearly all successful, within a few days. To foreign correspondents Bürckel declared that the order was rescinded; he said it to foreign correspondents only. The sweep of the Nazi scythe continued to cut down ruthlessly the flower of the intellectual and professional life of Vienna, impatient to destroy the last traces of that cultured civilisation which for five years had marked out the distinction between Austria and the barbarous Germany of Adolf Hitler.

The whole horrible drama is to-day being re-acted in the Sudeten areas. This time you must not blame Hitler so much. He has three colleagues. The immediate cause of the new horrors is that document signed at Munich on September 30th bearing the signatures of Chamberlain and Daladier as well as of Hitler and Mussolini which says:—"Great Britain, France, Italy and Germany have agreed on the following conditions and procedure and declare themselves individually responsible for their fulfilment." Plunder, murder, insult, torture, concentration camps, ruined existences, head-hunting, refusal of asylum by the Czechs and brutal handing over of refugees to the Nazis—"individually responsible" are these four Powers, excluding Czechoslovakia but including Britain.

Does that disturb your sleep?



## CHAPTER XXVII

### “ BACK, OR I SHOOT ! ”

TO THE DEEP DISAPPOINTMENT OF THE NAZIS, HITLER'S triumphal entry into the capital of his native country, which had wounded his pride by its rejection of his gospel of “ blood and soil ” for so many years, was now unaccountably delayed. On Saturday he had reached Linz, less than two hours journey from Vienna, and all preparations were made by the Nazis to welcome him in the capital the same day. He did not come. On Sunday the Nazis of Vienna and the hundreds of thousands imported from the provinces by the Party to swell the enthusiasm waited, tense and worried. Still no Hitler. Police-Chief Himmler, it became known, had angrily rejected all the elaborate security preparations made to safeguard the life of the conqueror on his drive through the streets as hopelessly inadequate; everything had to be reorganised. (If the Jews never prayed for Hitler's safety before, they must have done it that day. One shot from a terror-maddened Jew, or from an embittered Austrian patriot, and a massacre of hundreds of thousands in the streets of Vienna would have begun.) But Himmler's redoubled precautions did not in any way account for the long wait, for it was not until Monday evening that the Führer finally entered Vienna.

The explanation was closely connected—as was only discovered later—with another curious delay. For Saturday night the Nazis had arranged a great torchlight procession around the Ringstrasse to welcome the invading army which had been so long on the road. The start of the procession was delayed to the last possible minute and the demonstration prolonged until the weary Nazis had shouted themselves to sleep, but not even the advance guard of the First Hundred Thousand had arrived. The Nazis had to content themselves with carrying shoulder-high past the University three slightly bewildered Bavarians of the supply services who had come on by train to help the billeting arrangements. In Austria the true explanation of all this is not

generally known even now; Hitler had delayed his arrival because the great German war machine had begun to creak and lumber, and finally broke down near Linz.

First the advance guard became disorganised. A large part of the tanks of the Second Army Division ditched themselves, despite the perfect weather and road conditions. Then the motorised heavy artillery developed defects and began to block the road. The national petrol shortage—in Munich no civilians could get a drop of petrol for three days after the march began, despite the fact that every detail had been planned in advance—had resulted in some units tanking inadequate provision. On the road, and through the confusion of the blocked highways, further supplies could not be brought up to them quickly enough. All day long on Saturday and Sunday huge bombers roared alarmingly over our heads in Vienna. It was not until weeks later that I learned how many, as soon as they had discharged their load of shock troops, took aboard all the petrol they could carry from Aspern and rushed back to Munich with it to fuel more machines. The estimates by foreign military attachés of the number of heavy tanks which they found lying helpless and paralysed between Linz and Vienna on Saturday varied between thirty and fifty: they, of course, could only note the few they chanced to run across. Hitler's particular protégé, the “Nazi General”, von Reichenau, whom (as Commander of Army Group IV) he had put in command of the army invasion, had made what the Austrian soldier calls a *Palawatsch* and the British a “bad *bunderbuss*”. On reaching Linz, Hitler, boiling with fury, had von Bock, a non-Nazi general, summoned immediately from Dresden to clean up the mess. The whippet tanks managed to disentangle themselves, and I saw some of them straggling down the Mariahilferstrasse, a far from impressive picture, at 5 a.m. on Sunday. Von Bock temporarily abandoned his derelict tanks and got the others, together with part of the artillery, loaded into railway trucks. Without at the moment realising the significance of it, I saw them later being discreetly off-loaded at the outlying Matzleinsdorfer Station, whence they made their “triumphant” entry into the Inner City on Monday. Any gaps remaining in the Führer's knowledge of the defects which had developed in his great war machine were filled up during his 120-mile drive in triumph from Linz to Vienna. Von Reichenau, von Brauchitsch and General Guderjan were soon on the carpet before the irate Führer. Von Keitel

had also to listen to a few well-chosen words which dealt largely with "inefficiency". When, after his arrival in Vienna, Hitler discovered a fact which up till then his Generals had succeeded in concealing from him—that owing to the blocked roads the 10th Infantry Division had been forced to make a detour, and arrived in Vienna four days late—his fury knew no limits. To the amazement of the world, which guessed nothing of the military *débâcle*, the conquering Dictator cut short his long programme of triumphal celebrations and rushed back to Munich by air the day after his arrival.

But although the world knew nothing, the German common soldier knew a lot, and the breakdown of the mechanised units soon started him talking in Vienna beerhouses of the superiority of "the good old four-footed, oat-driven motor". The Reichskanzler shouted at Brauchitsch and Keitel that they had made the German army a laughing-stock for the Austrian General Staff, who knew the whole story. This was too much for the Reichswehr generals to swallow from the ex-Corporal and, backed up by Beck, the Chief of the General Staff, they reminded the Führer of his refusal to listen to Von Fritsch, who at the time of the Rhineland occupation, the intervention in Spain, and finally when the plans were drawn up for the invasion of Austria, had repeatedly warned him that Germany was quite unable at present to face a major war. They pointed out to Hitler that by the dismissal of Fritsch and the disregarding of his advice, he had exposed the flower of his army to destruction by hostile air-squadrons as they stuck helpless for nearly forty-eight hours on the Linz-Vienna road.

On the morning of the day when Hitler entered Vienna, a remark of mine that I supposed the British National Government would swallow the rape of Austria without a word of protest, was countered by an official Englishman with the words: "Since we've got to swallow it, let's hope you newspaper men allow us to do so with as little awkwardness as possible. You can all point out the enthusiasm with which the Viennese are preparing for Hitler's entry, for example——"

"And suppress, I suppose, all mention of the bitter humiliation, rage and fear among eighty per cent. of the Viennese—the Austrian patriots—who would rather die than be seen on the streets to-day!"

"Damn it all, Gedye," said my friend irritably, "then just tell me what you would do if you were the P.M."

With equal irritation I burst out: "I think I would try the

effect of a very discreet warning in Berlin, that unless the German army stopped where it was in Linz and withdrew on the best excuse we could all devise together for saving its face, the Czechoslovak air force would begin at midday to plaster the road from Linz to Vienna with bombs, and Britain, France, Russia and the Little Entente would block the road to further aggression; if our terms were accepted, we would supervise the holding of a plebiscite in Austria as to her future and abide by the result. That is the kind of quick action Hitler would employ to meet a situation, with a column of invading troops and the heads of the hostile country strung out at his mercy. I do not see why we should not pay Hitler for once the tribute of the sincerest form of flattery.”

Thereby I invited the very natural retort: “Then thank God there is no fear of you ever becoming P.M.”

Naturally, when I accepted this invitation to blow off steam about British policy, I had no idea what a really admirable target the invader presented at the moment. Nor did I know then that German nervousness was such that on the Friday when the march began, Herr Eisenlohr, the German Minister in Prague, had twice asked for assurances from the Czechoslovak Government that Czechoslovakia would not mobilise. In return he promised in Hitler’s name that the troops would nowhere and at no time go within fifteen kilometres of the Czechoslovak frontier, and that the Czechoslovak Government should be kept constantly informed of the details and strength of the units involved.

It was now the turn of Herr Hitler to listen to some home truths. His outraged Generals reminded him that the warnings of Fritsch had been supported by Blomberg, by experienced army group commanders, such as Ritter von Leeb, by Army Corps Commanders such as Von Kleist, Kress von Kressenstein, and experts such as General Liese. It was just these officers, groups around that typical representative of the Prussian Officers’ Corps with its aristocratic Protestant and monarchist traditions, General von Hammerstein, whom Hitler had long ago relieved of his duties, who were personally hated by him as inveterate enemies of the Nazi Party. Consequently he had been over-ready to turn a deaf ear to all their warnings, given purely from the standpoint of military experts, but suspected by the Führer to have been inspired only by political prejudice. The objections they had been raising against the prosecution of the U-Boat

hero, Pastor Niemoeller, made Hitler still less inclined to listen when they warned him that Germany could not overnight make up the seventeen years' leeway of the Peace Treaty restrictions in the air and tank services, and that his shortage of experienced officers, as well as constructional failures in the hastily built tanks and doubts about the efficacy of the Buna *Ersatz* rubber tyres of the mechanised infantry, called for caution. True, Hitler could still reply to his critics that he had been right in prophesying that Britain and France would again be afraid to call his bluff. But his own disgust at the spectacle he had witnessed left him in little mood to take this line again. Within a fortnight followed the partial rehabilitation of von Fritsch.

Little did the wildly cheering masses dream of the Führer's real mood as he drove into Vienna on the greatest day of his amazing career. For the Nazis this was the culmination of their five-years' struggle, and to say that the crowds which greeted him along the Ringstrasse were delirious with joy is an understatement. Despite the brutalities and horrors which his entry foreshadowed, I found something pathetic about the frenzied conviction of these small middle-class people, roused by fanaticism out of their normal stolidity, that for them the millennium had come to Vienna with the little man in the brown uniform standing in the enormous army car, whom I watched moving rapidly past the Hofburg to the Hotel Imperial, which had been cleared of its guests to make room for him. His car was closely preceded and followed by thirteen police cars, in which stood the keen-eyed S.S. of the Gestapo in their black uniforms, with the sinister skull and crossbones on the cap, sternly scanning the crowds for any trace of danger. A triple row of Berlin police in their pale-green uniforms and shakos *faced* the packed masses for the same purpose. The roaring of the great crowds—the greatest I have ever seen in Vienna—must have been plainly audible to Schuschnigg and the many thousands of less distinguished Nazi prisoners in their cells as the triumph reached its culmination. The S.S. heaved a sigh of relief as the Dictator reached the Imperial unharmed. The crowds could not understand—knowing nothing of the pictures of disorganised columns which filled Hitler's mind—why their god did not come out and speak to them. For once the "leadership principle" failed—the crowds refused to go home despite warnings from the loud-speakers that the Führer was "too tired" to speak to them. Finally the conqueror of the city whose dosshouses he had left

many years before, an obscure and embittered failure, came on to the balcony. One Austrian General was willing to grace his triumph that day—the aged Nazi General Alfred Kraus, who more than a year before had promised Goering that the invaders would not be resisted. Hitler spoke only a few sentences to gain peace from the crowds, saying that Germans from Königsberg to Cologne and from Hamburg to Vienna, 74,000,000 of them, swore that day an oath to be united for ever. Actually, of course, the oath was sworn only by Herr Hitler himself and the crowd, but let that pass. The “ leadership principle ” had reasserted itself.

Less than twenty-four hours before Hitler's entry, the annexation of Austria had been made known with cynical abruptness. We of the foreign Press were invited to attend at the Austrian Chancellery at 7.30 p.m. on Sunday, March 13th. All the Press Department officials, with one single exception, had been arrested—the Austrian civil servants with whom we had been accustomed to work for years. In their place was a glib gentleman with a monocle, of anything but “ Aryan ” appearance, who had formerly been correspondent of a Vienna newspaper in Bucharest, where he was a well-known boulevard figure. M. Lazar first informed us that the Head of the State, President Miklas, had been ordered by Chancellor Seyss-Inquart (from whom he had only just taken the oath of loyalty) to resign. Miklas had obeyed, and Seyss-Inquart had become in consequence Chancellor and President at the same time. Consulting his watch, he asked us not to go, as on the stroke of eight he had another very important announcement to make. In between he entertained us with tales of how he had never expected to become Press Chief of Austria until twenty-four hours before, when the Nazis had offered him the job as he sat “ drinking a whisky-and-soda in a Berlin bar ”. As the last stroke of eight sounded, Lazar, who was in a state of nervousness which suggested that another whisky-and-soda might have been welcome, announced the annexation. Telling us that the post he had just assumed had at that instant ceased to exist, he read out what he called a “ Federal and Constitutional Law ”.

The first Article proclaimed Austria to be part of the German Reich, the second fixed April 10th as the date on which the Nazis would hold a plebiscite “ to ratify ” the annexation which was then being carried through by *force majeure*, at which the Jewish part of the population would not be allowed to vote. Thus was the snuffing out of Austria proclaimed to the world by the obscure



M. Lazar, who a few days later was on his way to Dachau for some unspecified offence, probably connected with his having failed to prevent Mr. Christopher Holme from using a telephone on the following occasion, which was to have fateful consequences for me also.

On the morning after Herr Hitler's arrival, the curtain which had been run down so rapidly on the Austrian drama lifted just an inch in circumstances which were extremely fortunate for the foreign Press. We had all been told by Lazar to come to the Chancellery before 10 a.m. to get Nazi press permits to hear Hitler speak on the Heldenplatz and to witness the parade of Germany's military might, which, a little late, had now made its impressive entry into the city. There was enough delay and confusion over the extremely bureaucratic procedure of issuing the passes to make everyone sigh for the Austrian slackness we had so often cursed, but which had proved several times more efficient than this boasted German thoroughness. Before Herr Lazar and his attendant sleuths had finished with us, Hitler was on his way to the Heldenplatz.

In front of me as I hurried downstairs with one or two other journalists, something had clearly gone wrong. A number of General Staff Officers of the Austrian army—whose troops I had seen returning from the frontiers to Vienna the morning after Schuschnigg's downfall, when their orders to resist had been cancelled, looking as shamed and crestfallen as any army defeated in the field—were massed at the foot of the stairs leading into the courtyard. They wore their brand-new Swastika arm-lets. I could hear their angry protests of "Outrageous!" and "A scandal!" as I drew near.

Suddenly a Prussian voice snarled at them in barrack-square tones: "Go back at once, every one of you—go back! Unless you obey instantly, I give the order to the guard to fire on you! SILENCE! No murmuring! Unless you clear these steps this very moment, I give the order to fire."

Here, at last, was the real story of the invasion and annexation of Austria. At first I could not believe my eyes and ears. This order must be meant for me and the journalists behind me—Hitler and Goebbels had proclaimed more than once their loathing of the Anglo-American Press. I pressed forward among the Austrian staff officers who should already have been on parade for Hitler. It was well that I did so, and was so able to swear to my facts later on. There were no civilians visible



to the man who had barked out the peremptory order like a brutal sergeant addressing the rawest of clodhopping recruits, only these leaders of the Austrian army. He himself was a young lieutenant in field-grey and steel helmet. He held a revolver menacingly in his hand and wore a sword. Red with shame and embarrassment, the very senior Austrian officers silently turned and obeyed the order, walking slowly and heavily upstairs to their quarters.

I returned to Herr Lazar and, offering him my newly signed pass, asked him just what value it was likely to have when before I could ever show it, I was forced to return to him as his prisoner under penalty of being fired on. Lazar was clearly as much a prisoner as we were. He telephoned agitatedly in all directions to try to procure our release, but without avail. He refused all explanation of the incident, made nervous jokes, apologised for having no sherry and biscuits on hand to assuage our wrath, and pointed out that by leaning well out of the window we could, after all, see the Heldenplatz in the distance. He was far from the truth in thinking that I at least was angry—I could have embraced him for his part in ensuring that I had not missed this revelatory scene.

“Are you going to send that story?” asked one of my colleagues to whom I told the details of the threat to fire on the Austrian officers.

“Am I not!” I replied. “It is the first, and will doubtless prove the last, unchallengeable story which gives a glimpse of what is going on behind the scenes. Now I am inclined to credit all those rumours of army protests, resignations and incipient mutinies.”

“I fancy it will be the last story you will ever send from Vienna,” was the reply.

I told him that even if it were, it was worth it.

Christopher Holme, Reuter’s man who had taken over in Vienna a few months before after doing some brilliant reporting with the Government troops in Spain, including a particularly valuable outspoken piece about the Franco massacres around Bilbao, calmly picked up Lazar’s telephone while he was out of the room, got his assistant correspondent on the line, and gave him the lead which was something to this effect: “I am here with the entire foreign Press imprisoned in the Chancellery under threat of being fired on by German troops if anyone attempts to leave.” When I was given my first order of expulsion three days

later, Holme had already paid the penalty of his temerity, and been chased out of Austria by the Nazis.

The big "feature stories" ended that same evening with Hitler's abrupt departure by air for Munich to carpet his generals, after piously expressing his thanks to the Almighty and the man who had betrayed Austria to him, Seyss-Inquart, "who has enabled me to bring about this great change so quickly, with the help of God". Seyss-Inquart established further claims on his gratitude by describing the rape of Austria by the German Army and the plundering bands of storm-troopers as "the legal decision according to the will of the German people and its leader". This was putting it at least more impressively than Herr Lazar's chatty remarks the night before on how the Call had come to him in a Berlin bar. The bitter scorn poured out by Hitler in this, his first formal speech in Vienna, on his defeated enemy Schuschnigg and on those who believed in loyalty to their former ruling House, the Habsburgs, showed that though he had five minutes before taken possession in the Hofburg of the sword of Charlemagne, the spirit of that age of chivalry had escaped him. Later, in the Reichstag, he again displayed his talents for gloating over and baiting a vanquished—and silenced—foe.

But there were still enough high-lights in the story of the aftermath to be recorded that week. It was now that the "suicides" rose to over a hundred a day, as careful enquiries made at the cemeteries and mortuaries established. The Nazis ten days later declared that they had not arrested more than 1600 persons. But even before Herr Hitler's departure from Vienna, the estimate accepted by the Diplomatic Corps generally was 30,000 to 40,000. The wholesale dismissal of the Jews began, the labelling and picketing of their shops, the seizure of all those worth taking and the installation of "Aryan" Commissars. How very many of these plundered not only for the Party but for their private pockets was to be revealed by Bürckel much later. With the full approval and support of the police, now wearing Swastika armlets, the Austrian Jews were everywhere to be seen under brown-shirted guards scrubbing pavements and cleaning lavatory bowls with their bare hands to make a German holiday. One highly skilled Jewish surgeon, whose services were required as a specialist by an influential Nazi, showed me a document he had been given stating that he was "exempted" from scrubbing pavements and lavatories. Another interesting

document which I saw was the permit flung across the table, after repeated interventions by the Polish Consulate, to enable a Polish subject to recover his stolen property. Signed by S.S. Headquarters, it ran : “ The Polish Jew XYZ is to be given back his motor-car ”. On the day following the public proclamation in the Hofburg of the annexation of Austria, the suicide rate amongst “ Aryan ” Austrian patriots was probably as high as that among the Jews; there were even cases where wives or daughters killed the husband or father before killing themselves to anticipate the Gestapo. In this first ten days of Nazi Austria, too, the art life of Vienna was satisfactorily purged of all its international celebrities in whose veins the blood of the heirs of Wotan was not undiluted. While motor-lorries laden with the private plunder streamed back towards the Fatherland, the 400,000,000 schillings worth of gold of the Austrian National Bank left for the coffers of the impoverished Reichsbank in Berlin. In exchange, Berlin sent to the postal and telephone services in Vienna, after dismissing all the Austrian chiefs, a highly trained army of spies and censors. The German system of terror by informers was established amongst the general population. Freemasons were arrested without charge wherever they could be found. The first steps were taken towards the ultimate beatification of the murderers of Dollfuss. July 25th, the anniversary of the murder, was decreed a public holiday, and arrangements were made to secure renegade Catholic priests to celebrate on that day solemn requiem Masses in cathedrals and churches for the thirteen gangsters who had been executed. Himmler, head of the S.S. and the Gestapo, and Hitler’s deputy, Rudolf Hess, laid wreaths on the graves of the murderer Otto Planetta and his accomplices. The Nazi Press announced that Planetta’s body would be disinterred and reburied in a grave of honour. By a stroke of the pen, the name of Dollfuss disappeared from street nomenclature throughout Austria and “ Planetta squares ” became the fashion.

Wilhelm Keppler, Hitler’s economic adviser, began the complicated task of harnessing Austrian industry to Goering’s four-year plan. Schuschnigg’s plebiscite fund was “ confiscated ” (actually, surrendered on terms, as we have seen) and the list of subscribers used to swell the number of arrests. As the street terror against the Jews continued, the Swastika ceased to be a badge of party membership or political conviction, and became a mere safety-pin. Foreigners who lacked the self-

confidence or self-control to tell the Nazis just where they got off when offered a scrubbing-brush and salts of lemon on the Graben began to sport miniature flags in their button-holes, and thus still further narrowed the circle around the unfortunate Jews, who had now to confront in public parks, cafés and restaurants such notices as "Jews not wanted here" and worse—even, it was reported: "Jews and dogs are forbidden in this park".

Beneath the tablet on the gates of the Augarten in which the "liberal Habsburg", Emperor Joseph II, proclaims that he gives it to all the people of Vienna for all time for their enjoyment, appeared now the notice: "Jews Forbidden". A little later even the benches on the Ringstrasse were forbidden to Jews, and any found resting their weary limbs on them savagely beaten.

The new Prussian masters of Vienna showed their abysmal ignorance of the solid foundations on which the Vienna worker had built up his faith in Socialism and the stubbornness underlying his superficially easy-going character by starting a great campaign of flattery of the Reds. "Strength-through-Joy" excursions to Germany were theirs for the asking—the Redder the more welcome. They were ordered to come straight from bench and lathe in their working-clothes and were thus loaded on to trains. In Germany these workers found that the Nazis were utilising their appearance in rough working-clothes to tell German workers that these overalls and ragged garments were the only ones the penniless workers of Austria could afford. Austrian and German comrades hereupon compared notes about quite a number of things, with the result that soon after their return to Austria, many of the supposedly converted Reds found themselves once more put aboard a train to Germany—bound this time for concentration camps or penal labour settlements. All day long and most of the night, that deadliest weapon of the modern dictator, the radio, thundered out its propaganda in words and music. I had to keep mine running incessantly to pick up what the Nazis were saying; it was for me the worst ordeal (save for the unending appeals of fugitives from the Terror for whom one was able to do so little) of all that nightmare period. Gauleiter Bürckel, backed by Goebbels, was one of the worst, with his savage incitements to pogroms. They became so bad that even Goering, as I heard from a friend of his sister, the wife of the Austrian Nazi leader Hueber, made it the principal object of his first visit to Vienna to try to put a

check on this, in view of the burning indignation aroused in America and other countries. I heard Goering shouting that within four years there would not be a Jew left in Vienna. But Goebbels and Bürckel were trying to secure the same result within four months. “Let us hope Schuschnigg in his prison cell can hear our enthusiasm to-night”, was one of many gems of Nazi chivalry which I heard on the radio. “His last words were ‘God protect Austria’. Schuschnigg need not worry! God has protected Austria—through Adolf Hitler!” and a great roar of delight went up from the listeners. According to generally accepted reports which have never been denied, measures had been taken to ensure that neither Schuschnigg nor Burgomaster Schmitz missed any of this, by placing loud-speakers in their prison quarters which they could not turn off by day or by night.

Behind all this inferno of apparently purposeless horror was perfectly cold-blooded and calculating Prussian method, and its aim was just as clear-cut as that of the robber barons of old—plunder. The bankrupt Third Reich, after five years’ conspiracy and threats, had finally stretched out its hand towards the wealth of little Austria. From its inception the brains behind Nazism had played with a skilled hand on the gullibility and cupidity of human nature. By perverting, diverting and canalising against one group of capitalists—the Jewish—the universal but inchoate post-war realisation that the whole economic system was cracking up and must be replaced by a more scientific and more equitable machine for production and distribution of profits, Nazism had but gained time. The evil system remained. It had been patched together by reducing visibly the power of the individual capitalist and wealthy rentier; none of this power passed to the masses. Together with such powers as the workers possessed previously to protect their interests, it was acquired by the Nazi party bosses, behind whom stood the same wealthy men as before. These men had simply organised themselves for defence against the population at large, and had subjugated themselves in their own interests to a central directorate. They had, of course, much tribute to pay to their protecting gunmen. This the masses saw, and were told that it was tribute which came to them. Sometimes they believed it, sometimes not. The lower middle-class nearly always did.

But none of the fundamental defects of the machine which

were leading to its break-up had been changed. It worked more rapidly—but this increased speed, so impressive from the outside, was merely accelerating the pace at which the machine was rattling itself to pieces. More wealth, more material was needed for patching. It lay to hand across the frontiers in Austria. Once acquired, it would open the path to seizing more and more patching material in other surrounding countries until the strength had been acquired for the final great plunder expedition—against the wealth of Britain and France.

Quite deliberately the period of private plundering of the Austrian Jews by individual Nazis was instituted—it kept these gulls quiet while the Third Reich consolidated its grasp, and the plunder, remaining at home, could always be later recovered from individuals among the Forty Thieves and placed in Ali Baba's Cave. (Hence the later arrest and dispatch to Dachau of individual plunderers among the Nazi leaders when they had served their turn.) It could not affect the success of the operations to steal the entire property of the Jews of Austria for the benefit of the bankrupt Third Reich. On July 21st, 1938, the Vienna *Völkischer Beobachter* published illuminating statements from Dr. Bilgeri, of the Government department specially set up to regulate the plundering of the Jews on scientific lines. As Dr. Bilgeri put it :

“ The property reported by the Jews is being dealt with according to the Hollerith system. When this process is finished it will be possible to give an exact figure for the value of Jewish property in Austria. At present estimates vary from three to eight thousand million schillings. Within six weeks we shall have laid hands on all Jewish fortunes above 5000 marks; within three years every single Jewish concern will have been Aryanised.”

True, a mere fraction of the total of ten thousand million Reichsmark given officially by the Nazis as the total plunder of which the Jews of Germany and Austria have already been or shortly will be completely despoiled. Still, together with the gold of the Austrian National Bank and other treasure, it was well worth five years' plotting to obtain.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### ABRUPT EXIT OF THE AUTHOR

FROM THE MOMENT OF HEARING THE END OF SCHUSCHNIGG'S farewell broadcast on March 11th, I had known that I personally had a choice between two courses. Either I suppressed all the worst features of the Nazi terror in the hope of finding sufficient favour with the new masters of Austria to be able to stay on indefinitely, or I gave the full truth without the least modification, in which case my days in Vienna would be very few. There are many cases where it may become the journalist's duty to his employers to adopt, at least for a while, the policy of tempering the wind to the unshorn wolf, but I was happy to find that this was not one of them. The Vienna post had never been one for covering Austria alone. All the staff correspondents there—at any rate of English and American newspapers—had the duty of covering the whole of the Succession States of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy—Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Jugoslavia and Rumania—except Poland, which was too much out of the picture—and in many cases Bulgaria, Albania and Greece as well. This was done with the aid of local correspondents in each capital, part-time "string men," who were usually natives of the country themselves and often spoke no English—and with the aid of the network of small news-agencies which grew up for the purpose. With the arrival of Nazi censorship, distortion, faking and manipulation of all news at the source, the departure of all Legations, most of which had maintained special officers to make contact with the Vienna correspondents of great newspapers, and the reduction of the former capital of the Habsburg Monarchy to the status of a German provincial city, Vienna's day as a news-gathering and transmitting centre had ended. Furthermore, I at once anticipated what in a week proved to be the case: that the Nazis would bring pressure to bear to secure the removal of all foreign staff correspondents from the former Austrian capital, where no publicity was desired for what was going to be done. My



view met with approval at home, and I was authorised to start to move my offices to Prague (which, as the only remaining democratic capital in central and south-eastern Europe, was the next most suitable centre of operations) as soon as I wished, remaining myself in Austria only as long as I thought the story worth while. I decided that I would like to stay and see through the farce of the forthcoming Nazi plebiscite on April 10th, but that to secure this melancholy personal experience it was certainly not worth while to suppress or modify any aspect of the truth about Austria. In sending the facts about the German threat to fire on the Austrian staff officers in the Chancellery, I was naturally fully aware of the risks I took. I realised, further, that in giving all the details of the armed Nazi raid and plundering of the Swedish Mission to the Jews—almost the only case, owing to the diplomatic protection accorded to the Mission by the Swedish Government, where one could quote chapter and verse without endangering the life of the victim—I had taken another step towards filling up the cup.

I therefore knew exactly what was afoot when, on the afternoon of March 18th, I received a telephone call asking me to visit the headquarters of the Press Police between seven and eight that evening. The head of the section, a handsome Austrian official of the old type, Hofrat Zoffal, received me very courteously, and said that he was sorry to have to put before me an order received from the Gestapo in Berlin instructing him to request me "politely" to leave "Vienna" within three days. I asked him the reason of the expulsion, and, as I expected, was told none had been given. I expressed a little surprise that the famous Prussian efficiency of the Gestapo had not prevented them from writing "Vienna" where they obviously meant "Austria", but assured him that I would not embarrass him or his new masters by merely removing myself to Baden near Vienna. The Police Chief seemed to be expecting some protest on my part at being turned out of the country at three days' notice, after thirteen years' residence, but if so he was disappointed. I only reminded him that during these thirteen years I had not had difficulties with the Austrian police on a single occasion, despite my constant and extremely outspoken criticisms of the Clerico-Fascist regime, but had proved unable to survive a single week of the Nazi regime.

To this, of course, he could do no more than shrug his shoulders and point to his orders. He did, however, tell me that for the present critical state of Europe the prime responsibility lay, not with Germany, but with the policy followed by the Entente Powers immediately after the War. I think he was surprised to find that I cordially agreed with him. I promised to send him the German translation of my book, "The Revolver Republic," in which I had said so emphatically many years before. I told him that I did not intend to make any effort to obtain diplomatic protection against this expulsion without reason given, realising after a recent declaration in the House of Commons concerning the rights of foreign Governments to expel British journalists, that this would be a waste of time. (As my colleague, Douglas Reed, late of the *London Times*, and now of the *News Chronicle*, has just written in his book "Insanity Fair": "Not even the domiciliary rights guaranteed to the British citizen under the treaties with foreign Powers are upheld for British journalists. They can be kicked out at will, without any specific charge, just as a propagandist stunt. Doing the job for which they are sent out, they are coming to be treated rather like spies in war time.") I therefore told the Herr Hofrat that I knew of a quite good train for Prague on Monday evening and proposed to take it. We parted on amicable terms.

I was a little pained, therefore, when he rang me up late that night and told me that I was to report myself to the head of the Gestapo for Vienna, the Prussian S.S. leader Oberregierungsrat Klein, in Gestapo Headquarters, No. 7 Herrengasse, at eleven the following morning. I knew of quite a number of cases where people who had reported to Klein in this way had left the headquarters in a prison van. I told Zoffal that it seemed a little harsh to be given an order of expulsion at seven and to have to report for arrest at eleven the following morning.

"There is no intention to arrest you," Zoffal replied, "but it is for your own advantage to obey the order promptly."

What would have happened had I the privilege of having Jewish blood in my veins when I presented myself next day at the Gestapo I do not know, as the first question asked me by the guard at the entrance was: "Are you an 'Aryan'?" I told him that in my country we had not yet begun to ask one another these riddles, but that "Aryan" or "non-Aryan",

I had to be in Klein's office within ten minutes, and that if he detained me playing guessing games about grandmothers he would presumably hear the answer from the Oberregierungsrat himself. On that the question of my ancestry was left in abeyance and I was given a guide to the Presence. The huge building was one great beehive of Germans in black uniforms with skull-and-crossbone badges, buzzing with their activities in arranging the arrests of Austrian citizens. Klein left me in his anteroom on the approved principle to cool my heels for nearly two hours.

"Last night you were given an order of expulsion," he began when I was at last sent in. "You know, of course, the reason."

I told him that I knew of a great many causes I had given the Nazis to dislike me during the past five years, but was quite unaware what specific incident had caused the present move. The big Prussian soldier stared at me intently, his eyes glittering with the "we-know-all-your-secrets-so-you-may-as-well-come-clean" look of the police inquisitor and said:

"You were among the journalists confined in the Chancellery on the day of the Führer's visit. On that occasion you sent a message that a German officer had threatened to give an order to fire on Austrian staff officers unless they retreated into the building. What impression do you imagine the publication of such a message made in Berlin?"

"I should imagine an even more unpleasant one than the spectacle of distinguished Austrian officers being treated in this way by a German comrade-in-arms and 'liberator' made on me", I told him. "Not even the fact that these officers had—in my view—dishonoured their uniforms by putting on your Swastika badge and had prepared themselves to take part in the parade of your Führer saved them from this public humiliation before foreign journalists. I realised at the time that your Government would be furious at publicity being given to such a shameful incident, but my duty is to my newspaper, not to the rulers of the Third Reich."

At this he stared at me harder than ever.

"Was not the real reason for your sending the story just resentment, due to a suspicion that our authorities had deliberately imprisoned you in the Chancellery to prevent you from seeing the Führer?"

"Although some of my colleagues expressed such suspicion",

I told him, "I did not agree with them, and never imagined for a minute that that was the explanation. I think you were all much keener on our seeing the Führer than I for one was on seeing him. I have had that privilege more than once, and I was not curious. My reason for sending the story was that it was far too illuminating an illustration of the real position to be either modified or suppressed."

"And what in your view", he asked sarcastically, "was the real position in the Chancellery that morning?"

I told him that if I gave it I should only add to my offence in his eyes.

"Never mind about that," he retorted. "I am interested to hear what you thought, and perhaps I will give you some indication of whether you were right."

"I imagine", I told him, "that your people felt unsure of themselves and of the willingness of the Austrian army officers to acquiesce in your seizure of the country. Probably there was a suspicion, rightly or wrongly, that these officers were preparing a protest or a revolt, and the officer who gave these orders took the very natural military precaution for anyone in the position of an officer of an invading army unsure of its ground and surrounded by hostility of threatening to shoot anyone who left the building. Had the threat merely been made to the journalists, it would have been worth recording, but of secondary importance only. The fact that it was made to Austrian officers in uniform threw a very valuable light for the world on the actual position between the German and the Austrian armies, which were supposed to be celebrating a fraternal reunion. That is why I sent it; the story was true, and I stand by every word of it."

"It was not quite true," Klein replied. "In a way you are right as to background—a sudden emergency arose, there was reason to suspect sudden danger, and immediate and ruthless measures had to be undertaken to counteract it. Someone perhaps went too far in detaining foreign correspondents so long in the building. What is untrue, according to the investigations I had made, is that the order was given by an officer. It was given by an ordinary S.S. guard wearing a black uniform like mine."

"There I must contradict you, Herr *Oberregierungsrat*," I told him. "I saw and heard the order given quite distinctly."

What formation the person responsible belonged to I cannot tell you, although I tried to read the number on his shoulder-straps. He certainly had not a black uniform like yours, but military field-grey with officer's badges of rank; he was wearing a sword and holding a revolver."

Klein asked whether I could swear to this, and I told him I could.

At this moment we were interrupted by the ringing of a telephone bell. My inquisitor picked up the receiver.

"Headquarters of the Gestapo for the City of Vienna, *Ober-regierungsrat* Klein! What, you've got him—the publisher himself? *Einsperren! Einsperren! Alles beschlagnahmen! Meldung!*" ["Lock him up! Lock him up! Confiscate everything! Report to me!"] "*Heil Hitler!*"

Then, turning to me, he fired an abrupt question:

"Were you old enough to be in the War? Officer? *Man merkt's.*" ["One sees it."] "I am inclined to cancel the order of expulsion against you."

This was a shock. I suspected some trap and said: "On what conditions? I cannot agree to suppress any facts which I observe myself or can ascertain to be true."

"I don't require that. I require that in reporting any such incidents as that in the Chancellery which you may run across, you make it clear to your readers that the circumstances are unusual here—times of violent change. Quite abnormal."

I told him that I had never failed to make clear in all my dispatches how very far from normal conditions were and that one had only to look out of the window at the Jewish cleaning squads to realise that.

"Very well. On those conditions I cancel the order of expulsion."

"Thank you."

The Gestapo chief banged the table with his fist as I let my curtness match his own.

"Don't you give a damn whether you are expelled or not?"

"Oh, yes," I told him. "Although it is, of course, quite impossible to stay on in this country permanently, I should be quite glad to remain until after the plebiscite."

The Gestapo Chief told me that I could stay as long as I liked. We shook hands, clicked heels, and I went home to stop my trunks being packed.

It proved hardly worth while. Immediately after the interview with Klein a new campaign started from Berlin to force me out of the country without the unpleasant publicity attaching to an expulsion. Exactly why Klein cancelled the order—if the responsibility was his—and why a fresh one was issued a week later, I have never been able to ascertain definitely. Apparently the cancellation of the order, however, was only due to some bureaucratic jealousy. Dr. Goebbels' Press Bureau had ordered my expulsion without the concurrence of Herr Himmler or vice versa. At any rate, it was the Press Bureau which was responsible for the ensuing series of hints conveyed to Berlin colleagues that they really thought it will be better for me to leave Austria, that "the news centre for Greater Germany is now Berlin, not Vienna", and over and over again, when *did* I intend to go? Already the list of my colleagues who had been forced out of the country was a pretty long one—Christopher Holme of Reuter's would never again in Vienna sing to us "*Tira la bomba*"; Douglas Reed of *The Times* had been dragged out of his train and plundered while getting away to Switzerland; M. W. Fodor of the *Manchester Guardian* and his wife had been brought to safety in Prague in the car of a kindly diplomat; Alfred Tyrnauer of the International News Service and his wife had been arrested at the Journalists' Room in the Main Telegraph Office by armed Nazis on the night of the fall of Schuschnigg, and although released within a few hours, both were unable to leave the country as their passports had been confiscated. (Only the personal influence of W. R. Hearst with Hitler enabled them to go later; Mrs. Tyrnauer never recovered from the shock, and died a couple of months later in Paris.) Dr. Friedl Scheu of the *Daily Herald* had been transferred to Prague, and the Nazis had let him know that his two-year-old daughter would be kept in Austria as a hostage—as I write she is still so held—until he came back to fetch her. Ernst, the staff photographer of the Wide World Photo Service, and Jacobson, of the Associated Press Photo Service, were both among the many Press photographers in prison. (Later the Associated Press office was simply shut up by the Nazis.) Clearly my days were numbered; when I finally got to Prague, one of my colleagues greeted me with: "Here comes the boy who stood on the burning deck!"

Tired of this constant nagging, on Thursday, March 24th, I replied over the 'phone to the Berlin colleague who for the *n*th time conveyed a Press Bureau enquiry about my departure, that he should tell them once and for all that I had instructions to stay and cover the plebiscite, and should do so. The Press Bureau was wasting its time trying to hint me out of Austria. If they wanted me to go before April 10th, they had better issue another order of expulsion, as nothing else would shift me.

Next day as I was leaving my flat to attend a Press Conference summoned by the new Nazi Press Chiefs sent down by Berlin, Baron von Stumm and Herr de la Trobe (to which I had received no invitation), a stranger whose profession was writ large on his face stopped and asked if I was Herr Gedye. Going through the correct Edgar Wallace motions of producing his secret police badge, he told me to come to the Press Police at seven that night to receive another order of expulsion—this time a final one. We walked a little way towards the City Hall together, chatting of this and that, and he reminded me that we had met before, at Enzesfeld, when I was covering the stay of the Duke of Windsor.

"Happier days for Austria, those," I remarked with deliberate tactlessness.

He gave me a reproachful look and said:

"*Es tut mir leid, Mister Gedye, aber diesmal ist es—Good-bye!*"

I guessed that de la Trobe would be holding me up as a horrible example to the survivors among my colleagues, and thought it would be fun to cover, as my last story from Vienna, the announcement of my own expulsion by the man who had insisted on it.

It was fun. With no idea that the criminal sat opposite him, the Nazi Press Chief told us that there were some three hundred foreign correspondents in Vienna, but that to this conference he had invited "only the real journalists". That told me, the uninvited guest, precisely where I got off. The "real journalists", I ascertained from a quick glance round, numbered about twenty. He dismissed the wholesale plundering, arrests, murders and suicides very neatly with the enquiry, "What can one say when journalists cable columns about plunder just because some Jew who has for years brutally oppressed his employees has a couple of ties or handkerchiefs taken out of his shop?" Fortunately, he said, there were not



many such journalists. One of them, the correspondent of a great English news-agency, had already been expelled.

"To-day", he said, "another order of expulsion is being issued against a well-known journalist". Those colleagues to whom I had imparted my news grinned at me, and somebody murmured, "Get up and bow, Gedye". La Trobe added, "I hope that this will be the last example we shall have to make, and that those of you who cannot make up your minds to write in a reasonable way will leave Austria of your own accord. We will not allow you to lie and make mischief." It could hardly have been put plainer, and we understood him perfectly. In effect, de la Trobe said: "Unless you are prepared to submit to our views and write only those things which will not cause difficulties to us, you will be expelled like Gedye, and can take a chance as to whether your papers can find a job for you anywhere else or leave you on the streets. If you won't do as we tell you, you had better leave before you are kicked out."

For myself, I left the Rathaus feeling a happier man than I had felt since Terror came to Austria on the night of March 11th. If I had wanted to please myself, I would have left the Austrian hell on the morning of March 12th. But one had to stay as long as one possibly could, to see and hear all the horrors and bestialities of the new regime and publish them to the world, though every hour and every day were an agony. Anything, too, that could be done to help the victims had to be done. But now, after doing the best I could on these lines, the Nazis had given me a passport back to decency and liberty which I was obliged by *force majeure* to accept. I had not shirked that horrible period by seeking expulsion, but now it had come I was very, very happy. When, some time afterwards, a friend warned me that if I continued to write what I knew to be the truth about Austria, I should be careful not to let people get the impression that I was resentful because I had been expelled, I stared at him stupidly. It was some moments before I could realise that for anyone who had not had to deal with all the horrors that I had in those days, it might not at first glance be apparent that if anything could have aroused sympathetic feelings for the Nazis in me, it would have been their issue of an irrevocable order of expulsion. I walked back along the Swastika bedizened Ringstrasse with a joyful *Nunc dimittis*

singing in my heart—in three days now, without running away, I should have seen the last of all the insignia of tyranny and fraud which still surrounded me on every hand.

Happily I went to Dr. Mandiak of the Press Police to get my *congé*. The atmosphere was several degrees colder than a week before, but still courteous. This time the order read, "To be over the frontiers of Germany, including Austria, by noon on Monday". This excluded my comfortable night train, and an extension from noon until midnight was refused. Thus, after thirteen years' residence, I had only half of one working day to prepare my departure. Again I was told that the order came from the Gestapo in Berlin and that no reason was given. I was called upon to sign an acknowledgement of the order to leave, "failing which forcible measures will be employed against you".

I asked for a written order of expulsion, and was told that there was none. I asked whether I could copy for myself the form I was being made to sign, and was curtly told "No". Evidently orders had gone forth to see that I got no more such good copy out of this order of expulsion as I had made out of my first—a futile precaution, because I easily memorised, and later published, the wording of this order as the police inspector dictated it with a little prompting from me. I volunteered to 'phone them up next day, Sunday, and let them know what train I was going by, to save them the trouble of keeping detectives watching my flat. The inspector accepted the offer with pleased surprise. "We are not authorised to demand that—we have only orders to see you aboard a non-stop train for the frontier. But if you would do it, it would be extremely kind and thoughtful of you." It certainly was. The thoughtfulness and kindness, however, were not for the Gestapo, but for the fugitives or their friends who were still liable to turn up at my flat at all hours of the day and night, seeking the help which, alas! I could so rarely give.

It was a good expulsion party on Monday. Nearly all the survivors of the Anglo-American Press were there. Among them was a face I had not seen for a couple of years—since I gave a farewell cocktail party for him in my flat and accompanied him to the Budapest motor-bus on his expulsion from Austria on suspicion of having had too good Nazi contacts. Now the tables were turned, and he was back again, while it

was my turn to make a hurried exit. But first there was the ordeal of the station police to be faced. It was only with the greatest difficulty that I was able to expel myself that morning. What, I had no certificate that my income tax had been paid? No permit from the German Art Monuments Department to say that my trunks were not packed with Tintoretto's? No documents showing that I was exempt from the Reich Fugitives' Tax? No papers establishing that Social-Welfare contributions had been paid on my behalf? And what about sickness insurance? And who could guarantee that my suit-cases had no false bottoms concealing diamond tiaras and fur coats? And how could I expect two customs officials to search two trunks and several suit-cases, not to mention a rod case, within the three-quarters of an hour left them before the train was due to start? "You had better put your things on a taxi again and go home. You cannot leave on this train."

I could only tell them to please themselves; I was deported, and the Gestapo said that unless I was over the frontier by noon I should be arrested. They had better fight it out with the Gestapo.

Then where was my order of expulsion? They had refused to give me one. Ho-ho!—a likely tale, that. I was to stay put, just where I was, while they telephoned the Gestapo about me. Perhaps I could tell them the name of someone in authority there—it was all so confused, with all these new Prussian secret police, they really did not know themselves where they stood.

By this time I was a walking directory to the Gestapo, and gave them a few names and numbers. Eventually my Enzesfeld detective turned up, and I sat down and lit a cigarette while they argued the question of to deport or not to deport. At last it was settled and the luggage examination began. It was now late, but everything had to come out. Suits were carefully tested for the crackle of banknotes, the turn-up of trousers for loose diamonds. Socks and shirts were turned inside out, soap prodded with needles. Most suspicious of all was that rod-case. It was shaken assiduously for several minutes, but no crop of ripe pearls fell out.

On the platform, much mirth and general envy from those still tied by their duties to the Vienna hell from which I am being so happily expedited. Someone has brought books, another a bottle of *Barack*, "the Duke of Windsor's own

Apricot Brandy ", from Budapest, another a last chocolate cake from the flapper's Mecca, Zauner's in Bad Ischl. Red roses—and of course a red carnation. An " Ode to Eric ", full of good lines about the Nazis, from the author. Ambiguous wishes for many happy returns. Farewell snapshots. Handshakes all round, not forgetting my detective, who grins sheepishly and looks as though he would like to be one of the bunch as he wishes me "*Gute Reise*"—but no happy returns. As the train moves off, a dozen apparent passengers jump out and melt discreetly—Gestapo agents who had been scouring the train for fugitives. Despite them, somebody raises a clenched fist amidst the fluttering handkerchiefs—somebody throws a red carnation saying, " And don't forget us—we are still here ! " The last glimpse of Vienna is one of the great Socialist dwelling-blocks, now of course a mass of officially flown Swastika banners. They make a brave show, but I can almost feel the concentrated sullen resentment of those from whose windows they flutter. What was it Karl Seitz said before on opening one of those blocks in the name of the Social-Democratic Party? " Long after we are gone, these stones will speak for us." Yes; and, I fancy, long after these angry, fluttering Swastikas have become rags and ashes, these stones will speak the same old language of their creators to the Vienna workers.

The train, to travel by which probably a couple of million Austrians would give their eyes, is practically empty. The gates of this prison State are still hermetically sealed. At last we stop on Czechoslovak territory—Lundenburg, which I must learn to call Breclav in the new life to-day starting among the Slavs. For the moment I am conscious only of one thing—there is not a single Swastika, not a brown shirt, not a skull-and-crossbones topping a sinister black uniform to be seen, no loud-speakers blaring marching-tunes and raucous insults to a fallen foe. And if I as much as whistle to myself the Horst Wessel song, I can look out for a thick ear. That is a good thought—so good that I almost forget to send telegrams announcing my safe arrival on democratic soil. Now, after many days too tense and hurried for appetite, I am hungry.

My companion in exile reminds me that he is too. Mephisto, my brown-shirted Dackel, sits up, and raises one paw in what his colour once led us to believe was the Hitler salute. But as I look at him, I see that the little crooked leg is not stretched

straight before him, but bent upwards. That little fat paw is certainly no outstretched hand, but a clenched fist. *Freiheit!* Meffi is going to feel at home in Czechoslovakia.

On the Masaryk Station at Prague there is a warm welcome from a few of those not lost but gone before. In the lounge of the Ambassador are several familiar faces with the bewildered, apologetic look of *émigrés*, uncertain of themselves and their welcome, homeless, futureless—most of them to be penniless when the loose cash they had in their pockets when they fled is gone. Yet these homeless men and women are the millionaires of the emigration—they can at least for a few days find the price of a cup of coffee in this hall where the new arrivals seem automatically to come first for news as to who is saved, who lost. The others have saved—quite literally—their naked lives.

One of them voices in a Prague Socialist paper his emotions in the simplest language in a "*Gruss an Wien*"—"Greetings to Vienna". Let me try to paraphrase it :

" Away—away ! Before the shameful fetters  
Touch us that other victims hourly feel !  
Our naked lives we've saved—is that so little ?  
Or a great deal ?

Belov'd Vienna—dost thou lie on Ganges  
Or on the Nile ? Thou'rt far, and so unreal !  
Yet in sad hearts thou linger'st. Is that little ?  
Or a great deal ?

We've kept our faith. All else they've taken from us.  
Faith in our creed no robber hand can steal.  
To this we cling. Is that so very little ?  
Or a great deal ?

So we fight on—far from the murdered homeland.  
Heartache for thee, Vienna, Time can't heal,  
It steels us to avenge thee. Is that little ?  
Or a great deal ? "

## CHAPTER XXIX

### AUSTRIA—WHAT NOW?

IT IS A SUNNY MORNING OF AUGUST 1938 IN PRAGUE. I AM starting work on the sun-bathed veranda of my house—I call it “the last house in Prague”, and it is the last in an unfinished road—which my visiting friends from abroad all tell me I have selected to live in “while waiting for the first German bombs to drop”, because its high, windswept location and the sandy soil on which it is built give me such an excellent chance against both gas and explosive bombing where the German general mobilisation develops into the attack.

I glance through the papers to see if there is any news of unforgotten Vienna. The paper is full of the Far Eastern conflict, of the long conferences between the members of Lord Runciman's Mission in Prague and the Henleinist leaders. England seems generally to be getting on excellently with the Nazis. At Berchtesgaden yesterday Adolf Hitler received in his home at Obersalzberg a deputation of the British Legion headed by Sir Ian Hamilton. (Were they also told “I allow no one to smoke in my presence!”? as was the Chancellor of Austria six months before.) A Berlin message records that yesterday, at the Burghausen Burg, the joint Anglo-German camp of the Hitler Youth was opened, and that the day before, thirty-five American youths and twenty-seven Hitler youths arrived together in Salzburg, after the American boys had spent ten days in a common American-German camp. Not a line, then, about Austria? Ah, yes; here is just one line, and, like the last items, it refers to a stay in camp:

“Among the prisoners in Dachau Concentration Camp are the former Minister of Finance, Dr. Draxler, the well-known Editor of the *Reichspost*, Dr. Funder, and Dr. Desider Friedmann, head of the Jewish Religious Community of Vienna.”

Why these names are selected out of thousands for mention

I have no idea—somebody wanted a “filler” to make out a column of print, I suppose. How all these Austrian Cabinet Ministers, lawyers, doctors, scientists, editors, Jews, working-men, aristocrats, Monarchists, Catholics, and Communists who had just one thing in common—the desire to maintain the independence of their own country—are passing this sunny August afternoon there is no indication. The curtain is drawn pretty tightly around that camp. And yet those who are not afraid to read such things can learn a lot about Dachau. Here are a few pen-pictures supplied by ex-inmates of the hells to which Hitler’s Germany has given the euphemistic title of “Concentration Camp”, taken from *Germany Reports*, that carefully compiled monthly publication of the underground German Social-Democratic Party published, formerly in Prague and now in Paris, in English and German.

“We give now”, runs the first, “a report from Dachau supplied by a released ‘protective custody prisoner’. After describing how the Jewish prisoners were isolated from March 16th to March 30th as ‘reprisals for the articles which have appeared in foreign newspapers about concentration camps’, and forced to write letters to us saying that it lay with us to secure their release from isolation by suppressing all such reports, our correspondent continues:

“On February 4th I was transferred from Lichtenburg Concentration Camp to Dachau. Here we were received by the Commandant, Barćanowski. While putting on our new prison clothes we were beaten and kicked by the S.S. Guards. The Block Leader, Schottel, offered me a length of rope to hang myself. We had an eighteen-hour night journey behind us, during which no one had slept, and now we had to stand from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. with no food at all. From the first day we were constantly beaten in Dachau. The Jewish prisoners worked in special detachments and received the hardest tasks. They were beaten at every opportunity—for instance, if the space between the barrows with which they had to walk or even run over loose flints was not correctly kept. They were overwhelmed with abusive epithets such as “Sow Jew”, “Filth Jew” and “Stink Jew”. During the working period the non-Jewish prisoners were issued with one piece of bread at breakfast—the Jews with nothing. But the Jews were always paraded with the others to see the bread ration issued. When during great heat it was allowed to fetch water for the working detachments, it sometimes happened that the Jews were forbidden to drink. On March 16th the Standard Leader informed us all that from now onwards all Jews would be isolated, as retaliation for the articles describing concentration-camp life which had appeared abroad. The windows of the “Jew huts” were nailed up and painted



over, the doors locked. They had to lie inside on their plank beds all day and all night except for one hour mornings and evenings, when they were brought out for "sport" under the supervision of the Block Leader. The air was so bad that often prisoners inside became unconscious. Naturally epidemics broke out. The Jews were not allowed to buy anything at the prison canteen or to smoke.

"On March 23rd all prisoners were formed up in a hollow square. The S.S. Commander Loritz announced that he was going to let us all see what happened to incorrigibles. Three prisoners were strapped down to a block, their heads muffled in blankets, and each given twenty-five lashes with four-foot cattle-whips which had been left soaking in water for the purpose since the preceding day. Three Block Leaders took it in turn to beat them. Further, twelve prisoners were given from one to two hours' "post hanging". They were hung up on posts with their hands tied behind their backs so that with their toe-tips they could just touch the ground. The picture of the trees bearing this human fruit will never leave me. . . . For being "reported" several times we got dark cells and twenty-five lashes.

"In February, March and April there were a number of "suicides" and shootings "during attempted escape". The Jew Löwenberg was horribly beaten during a works' task, and committed suicide that night. In March two men were "shot while attempting escape". The Jew Löwy was shot dead for approaching closer than the regulation six metres to a sentry who had called him up. Another was ordered by a sentry again and again to approach until he stepped on the forbidden "neutral zone" outside the barbed wire, whereupon he was shot dead. In March a newly arrived prisoner was forced to run with his barrow until he dropped dead from heart failure. In June a Jew was brought here under suspicion of "race pollution". He was so ill that we had to wheel him into camp on a wheel-barrow, and so wheel him to morning and evening roll-call, as the doctor would not put him on the sick list. In a week he was dead. I know that there were many more cases of "suicides" and shootings, but of them I have no details. In my time there were some 2500 prisoners in Dachau.' "

(Himmler in 1937 gave the total of political prisoners in concentration camps as 8000—to these must now be added many, many thousands of Austrians.)

Here is a picture given by a political prisoner of Erfurt :

"Among us when we were brought in was an eighty-year-old war cripple, Wilhelm Bristaff, of Wattenscheid. He could not stand upright, but was taken off and horribly beaten because he did not comply with an order of the Chief Inspector, Wooge. The food here was particularly bad. A prisoner named Otto Bauer reported sick, but was ordered out to work by the doctor, Rückert. As he could not stand up, he was dragged from bed and driven to

work. Next day he was dead. Another whose name I have forgotten, who had been arrested for having referred to Göring as a morphinist, was similarly treated. He, too, died. While I was in Erfurt the storm-trooper, Inspector Held, was a prisoner for four months. He was an accomplice in a case of misappropriation of funds in which Police President and Nazi Standard-Leader Weber was also involved. One day he was moved to a solitary cell, and after a while found dead. Held knew too much. Inspector and storm-trooper Leader Wooge was particularly brutal to prisoners. We could hear from the courtyard the screaming of the prisoners whom he beat."

Here is another picture of Dachau published in another issue of the German Social-Democratic Party's *Germany Reports* :

"... In Number One Company are the so-called 'Twicers'—'politicals' who have been sent back for a second tour of Dachau. They number between 190 and 200. They are cut off from all other prisoners, who may have nothing to do with them. Their area is fenced off. They are not allowed to move about the camp in their free time, only on a strip of ground between two huts seventy yards long and five yards broad. These men are all told that they cannot hope to be free under ten years. No smoking is allowed, and only one short letter in three months. Once in three months their families may send them ten marks for extra food. They are almost all former functionaries of Left parties. Their faces are all lined with their sufferings. They are placed under the S.S. Leader Danbach, a particularly cruel man with prisoners. . . . Number Four Company consists of prominent former politicians who have been long in Dachau. The former Minister President of Braunschweig, Jasper, a Social-Democrat, is particularly tormented. They tell him, 'As long as one decent working-man is in Dachau you will never come out'. Prisoners are all costumed according to their classification. Coloured strips are sewn on the trousers, arms and back. Politicals wear red bands, perpendicular, on the back, race polluters yellow stripes with red circles, 'Twicers' red bands crossed, 'political' Jews red bands with yellow circles, Jewish *émigrés* red bands with blue circles, 'Aryan' *émigrés* blue bands, perpendicular, on the back.

"The treatment of prisoners varies. Some of the guards have got weary of tormenting us. For instance, the S.S. man Steinbrenner, who was the terror of Dachau, has quite changed. He has lost all interest in torture, and leaves the prisoners alone. The Camp Commandant, Weissenborn, made things very bad for the prisoners during his time. It was under him that a man of fifty-five to sixty who was being insulted and tormented by a young storm-trooper and finally replied, 'You are young enough to be my son, you cheeky brat', was immediately struck down and dragged away. That night Weissenborn made us all parade and announced: 'This afternoon a creature raised his hand against a sentry. I wish to inform you that he is already a corpse. Note it.—Dismiss!'

"... Among the suicides was that of the nineteen-year-old Hans Sollner, brother of the former Communist Deputy, who had been in Dachau since March 1933. He was held as a hostage for his brother, to force the latter to return to Germany and surrender. In one afternoon he made three attempts to kill himself. First he seized a hatchet and tried to brain himself, but was stopped. An hour later he tried to hang himself with his braces in the w.c. A fellow-prisoner saw it, and he was resuscitated. Finally he sharpened a piece of tin and opened arteries in both arms.

"Against the fifty-year-old Jew, Dr. Fels, a former army doctor accused of 'race pollution', was directed the concentrated hatred of the storm-troopers. He was made to labour in water-filled ditches. Once the sentries forced him with their rifle-butts to duck beneath the surface. When he came out of the ditch they flung him back again. Another time they forced him to crawl on all fours and eat stinging-nettles, which made him ill. Another favourite trick was to stop his bread ration and make him stand by while all the others ate. His life was one long martyrdom. One day he was found hanging from a window.

"On June 13th the sailor Otto Fosswinkel, a Hamburg Communist, was brought in. At the trial of Fiete and Schulte he had shouted in court 'Save Fiete from death!' The S.S. leader, Deubel, said to him as he was brought into Dachau: 'Man, look well at the sun. You can talk of good luck indeed if you see it rise once more.' We never saw this prisoner again."

Here is an account of the conditions in the new camp for Jews at Buchenwald at the present day:

"The prisoners have to parade at four o'clock in the morning. They work on the roads and in the quarries. Many are in a weak condition because of the bad food, the ill-treatment and overwork. Those who fail, in the opinion of their guards, who are S.S. men, to do the required amount of work, are punished with twenty-five strokes of the lash, which is a heavy, tapering thong of cowhide. These floggings occur daily, the victim being strapped on a trestle.

"Last October, when two prisoners escaped, the other prisoners were made to stand on parade from six o'clock in the evening until eleven the following morning. Several prisoners collapsed, and were punished by being deprived of food for three days. One prisoner, named Weinreiter, was found to be hiding in the carpenter's shop, and he was executed. Of the two prisoners who escaped, one got away altogether, the other was recaptured, and as he had killed his guard making his escape, he was handed over to the police, tried for murder, sentenced to death, and beheaded.

"One morning the Camp Commandant asked for seven volunteers for some special job. No one responded, whereupon five men were selected and marched off to the front of the camp. Shots were heard. The men were never seen again, only their clothes, bloodstained and pierced with bullets, were returned to the camp. The names of two of the victims are Bischof, a Social-Democrat

and former municipal councillor, and Fischer. The names of the other three are unknown.

"The death of the lawyer Hans Litten, which occurred at Buchwald, was reported some time ago. A load of heavy stones was tipped over him. He was carried off with a broken thigh and a damaged chest. It was from these injuries that he died.

"The 'Bible students' are subjected to special ill-treatment. Some have undergone a so-called 'German baptism'. They were placed in a barrel of sewage and asked 'if they still believe in Jehova'. The 'Bible students' have shown a dour fervour in all camps and prisons, and at Buchwald they refused to answer the question. They were then completely submerged in the sewage again and again.

"In the year ending last May 145 prisoners were either killed outright or beaten to death or driven to suicide at Buchwald."\*

Yes, it must be more fun in an Anglo-German or American-German Hitler Youth Camp than in the purely German or Austro-German camps at Dachau and Buchwald. It seems a pity that the enterprising tourist agencies who take admiring parties of English and American tourists around the beauties of the Rhine and the Black Forest, and bid them admire the wonderful motor roads and other achievements of the Third Reich cannot include on their schedules a visit to one of the dozens of concentration camps. For other countries have built motor roads, but these camps are something unique in respect of which no other land, not even Fascist Italy with her Lipari Isles, can compete with the Third Reich of Adolf Hitler.

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And what of Austria now? How fares it with those Viennese and other Austrians who are outside Dachau—the Austrian Nazis, that approximate third of the population to whom Hitlerism was going to bring the millennium, the Austrian patriots brought up to love their own country, with memories of Prussia as the uncouth, brutal and efficient cousin who for centuries had been a figure of fun? How goes it with the hundreds of thousands excluded from citizenship of their own country by its new masters because of its fantastic blood theories? How fares that unique product of an atmosphere in which flourish all the graces, all the arts, while the harsher virtues survive only with softened and rounded contours, the Viennese? How fare the sturdy Socialist workers, the often backward peasantry?

\* *Manchester Guardian*: Special Correspondent, August 1938.

From Vienna the glory has departed. All that Vienna has meant to her lovers is dead or in process of destruction, while a new, hard German provincial city is being stamped out by the Prusso-Nazi die. Goering himself proclaimed one of its ideals in banishing *Gemütlichkeit*—the characteristic of the Viennese which sums up his charm, his virtues and his failings. (As well might a Viennese Dictator bid the Prussian unlearn discipline and methodical routine.) “Quick, quick”, he cried in May on opening the Hermann Goering Works in Linz. “You have to prove to the world that you are not easy-going. An eight-hour day is not enough. Work, work!” Soon began compulsory physical training and forced route marches for elderly as well as youthful office-workers. The Viennese, who voluntarily makes and keeps himself fit from pride of body, was rebellious. Compulsory labour in the Reich, with its harsh discipline and long hours, has proved so unpalatable that workers are no longer allowed to take bicycles with them, so many had used them to escape back to Austria. Compulsion, compulsion, has become the keynote of Germany’s new labour colony. Under compulsion working gangs have efficiently rushed in the harvest formerly garnered by the farmer and his family at the normal pace. Under compulsion villages are being evacuated and destroyed by the hundred—42 in the Waldviertel district alone—as part of Germany’s war plans, to be replaced by fortifications, military aerodromes with their underground hangars and bomb-proof barracks. “*Tempo—tempo*”—“Speed, speed!” Vienna gasps for breath as the Prussian drive continues. There is speed in departure, too. For months there were not enough railway trucks available to move the household goods of those speeding out of the capital—foreign legations and their staffs, great foreign industrial and trading concerns giving employment to thousands who had here their centre for all Eastern and Central Europe, headquarters of the world’s Press for the same areas, who from Vienna covered the affairs of eight or ten countries with a network of sub-correspondents stretching through them. And the Germans speed these latter parting guests almost as eagerly as they do the Jews who have been plundered of their last farthing, for they want no witnesses to what is happening in Vienna, to what is going to happen in Austria. The fiat went forth that all news from Austria had to be centred on Berlin, and the local correspondents

remaining know that to tell all the facts means expulsion or arrest. Nor was that all. Nervous Berlin correspondents began to plead that Prague correspondents should be muzzled as far as Austria was concerned—otherwise the Nazis might get after them. Only a fraction of the truth about Austria can now reach any of your newspapers. All honour to the plucky local Vienna correspondents who have daily and hourly to weigh how much they dare tell, how much only hint at, and what of the truth must be entirely suppressed.

Newspaper readers should take a course of interpreting Austrian news. For a start, I suggest you try to understand just what lies between the lines of this cleverly worded little message:

“Herr Bürckel . . . has ordered that no violence shall be offered to Jews. This should put a stop to scenes like some of the last few days. Making elderly men obviously unaccustomed to such exercises perform physical jerks to words of command for hours at a time before a jeering crowd is not considered violent treatment. Running the gauntlet, on the other hand, comes under the heading of violent treatment.”

Departing physicians of world-wide fame, psycho-analysts with Freud at their head, scientists, musicians, writers, opera singers and lawyers mingled with thousands of humbler folk seeking to flee from the arid desert to which Nazi culture is fast reducing the cultural oasis which Vienna formed amidst the general sterility of Nazi Germanism. Were not the world's frontiers almost hermetically sealed against the hordes of penniless people whom Germany would expel after stripping them of their last possessions, the pressure on means of transport would be increased a hundred-fold.

From the Third Reich have been imported the “German glance” and the “German whisper” to invade the deserted Vienna cafés—that quick, involuntary glance over the shoulder before the conversation, always in undertones, begins. Hunted from cafés, parks, and bathing beaches, the 300,000 Jews of the city lie hidden all day throughout the heat of a Vienna August, the cold of a Vienna February, their blinds drawn, fearing that every doorbell-ring may mean a summons to come out before the jeers of the mob and plunge their hands into lye or hydrochloric acid and water to remove designs painted in the streets for the purpose by their tormentors, or



to join the thousands in prison or concentration camps. Not the Jews alone—Monarchists, Catholics, officials, workers, peasants, everyone who had any connection with the huge patriotic Austrian organisation, the Fatherland Front, have reason to dread each ring and each knock. Still outside the foreign consulates stand the trembling would-be fugitives in queues of hundreds—on some days even thousands—long, under the mocking glances of storm-troopers and police. After hours of waiting the majority must depart without even being able to hear a heart-breaking but final “No”, and go home, often to turn on the gas for the last time. On one single day last August three thousand such pathetic creatures stood in line outside the American Consulate-General.

When I left Austria the physical terrorism was only just beginning. It increased and continues unabated—merely a little more discreet in its manifestations—until to-day. Here are a few snapshots taken at random from the album of the last few months of the Terror. Day after day storm-troopers have been marching out in formation to round up Jews for the sadistic and orgiastic “circuses” in the Prater. Surrounded by howling mobs, the herded Jews were forced to go for long hours through the shameful parody of physical exercises, while their tormentors kicked and assaulted the weakest of them. A favourite sport is the compulsory goose-step for the aged and often infirm.

The great joke is for a hefty storm-trooper to seize the uplifted foot of a victim and jerk him violently backwards. Thus on a single day were two elderly Jews killed in full view of the mobs. In another case of which I have knowledge, a surgeon was called by some bystander with a spark of humanity unyet extinguished in his heart to attend to a prostrate Jewish victim of this sport. It was unnecessary for the surgeon to give more than a single glance to see that his patient had been freed from all further suffering. How many times such horrid instances must be multiplied to get a true picture of the Vienna of 1938 neither I nor anyone else but the guardians of the Nazis’ most secret statistics can tell. Do not, if you are the sort of person who could, seek to ease your mind with the thought that these victims were all “East-End Jews”, poorest of the poor and accustomed to indignities and pogroms in their Polish, Czarist-Russian or Rumanian fatherlands. Among



them were members of the Viennese aristocracy, many of whose grandmothers do not pass the Nuremberg test.

Here is another true picture. Outside a house in the Leopoldstadt stands the cart of the Anatomical Institute. Into it are being loaded the bodies of a whole Jewish family. Around the door lounge grinning storm-troopers. Over it hangs a large sign they have just put up—"Neighbours, please copy". Perhaps this incident among many more within my personal experience is worth recording. Friends of a well-known Jewish merchant in Vienna seriously planned getting him denounced and arrested in the hope of saving his life, so near was he to suicide every time the doorbell rang. And this—a chemist told me that his sales of poisons in compact form had quadrupled in a few days of the Nazi regime. He violated the law constantly in handing them out to ashen-faced applicants. Firstly, he knew the Nazis would make no trouble for him over this, for the customers were all Jews; secondly, he had a great heart and was doing the kindest thing he knew. The poisons, be it noted, were rarely for immediate consumption—they accompanied the purchaser by day and night, ready for the call.

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This from my August 1938 cutting file :

" *Bratislava.*

" A tragedy illustrative of the sad lot of refugees from Austria unable to find any country to give them shelter occurred last night near the frontier station of Berg. A Bulgarian resident in Austria named Nikolaj Novakoff took pity on a Jewish refugee named Paul Kastner and tried to smuggle him into Czechoslovakia. Hardly had the two got across the frontier than the Czechoslovak frontier guards, who have instructions to prevent anyone escaping from Austria into this country, appeared and arrested Novakoff. As Kastner saw them approach to drive him back across the frontier into Austria, he put some tablets of poison in his mouth and swallowed them, falling dead instantly.

" The applications for would-be *émigrés* from Austria to enter Czechoslovakia now amount to close on 100,000. The Czechoslovak authorities have caused statements to be published that they cannot allow any exception to the prohibition of former Austrian subjects entering this country, except in such cases where the applicant can produce a valid visa to enter and residing in another country and prove that he is in possession of sufficient means to go to that country."

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The real figures for the number of Jews hounded to their deaths by the sanction of the absolute Dictator of Germany will never be ascertained until the Nazi tyranny has passed, but this is what the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of Chichester—among others—were prepared to back with their signatures in *The Times* of July 19th, 1938 :

“ We have before us a credible report that since Herr Hitler and his forces entered Vienna, some 7000 Jews have committed suicide in that city alone. The degree of suffering, terror and hopelessness thus attested defies imagination. No comment is needed on Field-Marshal Goering’s wireless statement at the end of March that the Jews had better do away with themselves if they wanted to, and that he could not put a policeman behind every Jew to prevent suicides.

“ We submit that this systematic attempt to root out and destroy the members of one of the most gifted human races in Austria and Germany has become a case of conscience for every man and woman who holds the Christian doctrine that the human personality is sacred, and who wishes to save our civilization from becoming a byword.

“ . . . and it seems to us just and right that Herr Hitler’s Government should be made to feel the odium which must attach to it as long as it persists in its present efforts. . . .

“ Soon or late a stand must be made. The conscience of Christendom cannot suffer judgement to go against it by default at the bar of history. The stand, we believe, should be made here and now, and the voice and the influence of Britain should be joined to those of the United States and of other civilised nations in challenging what will otherwise be a degrading reproach upon our humanity and our Christianity alike.”

Does Mr. Chamberlain—does Lord Halifax—ever read the correspondence columns of *The Times* ?

Hitler’s friends tell the story of how, some two years after the massacre of June 30th, 1934, in the middle of a conference on military matters in Berchtesgaden, Adolf Hitler suddenly sprang up and screamed at his Generals and Cabinet Ministers : “ That’s enough about Röhm ! If any one of you even mentions his name again, I will have him arrested ”, and burst into hysterical weeping.

There are two points about that story. One is that no one had made the slightest reference to the murder of Röhm, and the second, that the English clergyman who told it to me thought that it showed that “ after all, Hitler must be a deeply religious man, with a real conscience ” !

June 30th resulted in the murder of under 1000 persons. The daily massacres by deliberately enforced suicide in Vienna had mounted up by July 1938, to over 7000. The Führer is said still to awaken in the night screaming from "visions" of the dead of June 30th. Does he never see the 7000 corpses of Vienna as he sleeps in that most lovely eagle's nest in the Bavarian Alps, Berchtesgaden? The roll of the dead lengthens even as you read these words. With rope, poison, knife and bullet the ranks of the dead will be increased to-morrow and the next day, until 300,000 human beings have been destroyed or driven into some wilderness where there is no frontier guard to turn them back. It is Goering's own programme, publicly proclaimed. And the rulers of England look on—or rather look away, hoping that the man responsible for the non-stop massacres of Vienna will give them a reassuring smile and say that England's turn is not yet.

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From my mail-bag :

(*August.*) " . . . I had an appointment with —— [an American colleague of mine in Vienna]. I was distressed to find him in such a bad condition. He spends his whole free time at the Père Lachaise cemetery. You know his wife died of the 'excitements' [she was among those arrested for a while by the Nazis in Vienna] some weeks ago."

(*August.*) " . . . You will be sorry to hear of poor old —— [a colleague who had worked for many years in Vienna for a famous London newspaper]. He and his wife went together with me to the lawyer in Vienna some time ago and she filed a petition of divorce on grounds of 'unbearable antipathy' because he was a Jew and she an Aryan who had to try to keep her tiny State pension by divorcing him. Such a devoted old couple. He kept patting her hand and telling her to be brave and to go on with it, that it did not hurt him at all, and so forth, while she sobbed uncontrollably. It was horrible. . . . Afterwards he got out and is now in London. He has had a complete nervous breakdown. His paper has given him some little job to keep him alive, but he is so completely broken up that he can hardly drag himself down to Fleet Street. The Gestapo got hold of his and his wife's careful savings of a lifetime for their declining days. The money was in England and they made him bring it back and plundered him of the last farthing before they would let him out."

From my expulsion fan-mail :

(*April.*) From William Muir Urquhart, writing from 14 East

55th Street, New York, N.Y., and from the Yale Club, Vanderbilt Avenue and Forty-fourth Street, New York. ". . . I have read with interest your correspondence of recent weeks, and I want you to know that I regard your expulsion by German authorities as absolutely justified. . . . All your moaning and groaning relative to Austrian Jews being forced to remove Schuschnigg symbols from the pavement [*sic*] a hardship comparable to the horse-play that would be required in a college fraternity initiation in the United States. Not a word out of you in the way of comparison between the bloody massacre of a few years ago when the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg-Jewish-supported crowd turned guns on the workers new apartment quarters and slaughtered them like helpless pigeons in a dovecot and the bloodless annexation which was the Anschluss. Obviously, Mr. Gedye, your friends, contacts and loyalties during your long residence in Vienna were with decadent Habsburg aristocrats and their rich Jewish sycophants. And rightly that jig is up—definitely. Furthermore I would advise you that such pandering and boot-licking as you and your ilk are doing for Jewish gold is contributing to the very rapid growth of anti-Jewish feeling. . . . I would also assure you that as a result of your kind of reporting most Americans prefer to draw their conclusions *re* the annexation of Austria to the German Reich from statements made by the head of the Church of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the head of the Roman Catholic Church in Austria, the [*sic*] Cardinal Innitzer rather than from correspondents like yourself who have prostituted their talents for a price."

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Newspaper cuttings:

" BRITISH OFFICIAL ARRESTED.

" DETAINED BY GESTAPO IN VIENNA.

*" Vienna, August 18th.*

" Captain T. J. Kendrick, the Passport Control Officer at the British Consulate in Vienna, was arrested on Tuesday morning near Freilassing, in the neighbourhood of Salzburg. Captain Kendrick is at present detained in the former Hotel Metropol, where Herr von Schuschnigg and Baron Louis Rothschild are imprisoned. This is now the headquarters of the Gestapo, the German secret political police. The reason for Captain Kendrick's arrest is not known to his family or to his friends."

" DIPLOMATIC ENQUIRIES IN BERLIN.

" Our Diplomatic Correspondent writes:—The British Ambassador in Berlin was instructed yesterday to make immediate enquiries of the German Government as to the cause of the arrest."

Enquiries! One thing about the British in these days of

crises—their rulers never lose their heads and can be relied upon to keep calm under any circumstances—and any insults. Poor Sir Neville! Seems to be kept nearly as busy as my old friend Sir Robert Hodgson in Burgos with “enquiries” and protests—generally with about the same result. Professing the Fascist creed seems to be the infallible talisman which allows one to twist the British Lion’s tail with impunity. But let Moscow put some British engineers on trial in open court, and—Gr-r-r-r! There’s life in the old lion yet!

Berlin newspaper cutting (August 21st, 1938):

“Captain Thomas Kendrick, the head of the Passport Section in the British Consulate in Vienna, has been expelled from Germany. . . . If the Reich has shown such consideration in this matter, that was done only with a view to future relations with England.”

Prague newspaper cutting (August 21st, 1938):

“. . . In the responsible London circles it is declared that no details whatever of the alleged evidence against Captain Kendrick were produced in any British official quarters.”

Excellent. “I takee your officer, I puttee in Gestapo cell, you no askee proofs, I letting go free, you takee my hand all time good friends now, you makee Four-Power pact you beatee topside Czechs, Bolshies, you giving colonies your new friend—all rightee?”

But what’s this? This does not look like surrender to Fascism, does it? Listen:

“We cannot prevent our people having an opinion in regard to wanton brutality, in regard to undemocratic regimentation, in regard to the misery inflicted on helpless peoples or in regard to the violation of individual rights. No country where thought is free can prevent every fireside and home within its borders from considering the evidence for itself and rendering its own verdict, and the sum total of these conclusions of educated men and women will in the long run become the national verdict. That is what we mean when we say that public opinion ultimately governs policy. It is right and just that this should be the case.”

Or this:

“He said that the contrast between violence and reason was reaching a decisive stage. The world was so small to-day that these two methods could no longer exist side by side; only one or the other would be possible. When in an ever-increasing circle the idea of peace disappeared, he said, their own ideals of in-

dividual freedom and their sacred political and social institutions were in danger.

“ ‘ When,’ he said, ‘ the dignity of the human soul is denied in great parts of the world and when that denial is made a slogan under which propaganda is set in motion and armies take the field, none of us can be sure that his country or even his home is safe. We know well, of course, that a condition of wholesale chaos will not develop overnight ; but it is clear that the present trend is in that direction, and the longer this drift continues, the greater becomes the danger that the whole world may be sucked into a maelstrom of savage economic, political and military competition and conflict.’ As ‘ appalling manifestations of disintegration which we have all witnessed ’ he cited :

‘ Invasion of the territory of Sovereign States :  
Interference in the internal affairs of other nations :  
Wholesale violation of established treaty obligations :  
Attempts to adjust international differences by armed force :  
The undermining of legally existing governments.’ ”

“ . . . It was necessary, he said, that the whole nation should support the one programme which was calculated to bring to a standstill the wave of contempt for the law and to lead the world to the way of permanent peace and security. The more numerous the States and nations which accepted this programme, the clearer would it be made to those peoples who at present relied on a policy of force that this policy of theirs had no hope of success and that the overwhelming majority of humanity was determined to live in a world in which it would not be tolerated that laws were despised.”

Surely those are words which convey a clear enough call to the civilised peoples to unite against such barbarities of Fascism as the crushing of Abyssinia, the German-Italian intervention in Spain—the rape of Austria and the betrayal of Czechoslovakia ! Surely they are sentiments which any Englishman should feel proud to have heard voiced by a British statesman ! In point of fact, of course, they were voiced in August 1938 by two Americans, Theodore Roosevelt and Cordell Hull.

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Outside a shop in the Praterstrasse labelled in huge yellow letters “ JEW ” stands a young girl. Alternately she kneels and rises to her feet. Around her neck is a placard : “ Please do not buy from me—I am a Jewish sow ”. In the window of a shop in the Mariahilferstrasse sits a middle-aged Austrian for five long hours. Around his neck is a placard : “ Look well at me. I am an Aryan, but a swine—I bought in this Jewish shop ”. Only the production of your foreign passport will

save you—perhaps—from like indignity, but not even then from insult, if you try to do likewise.

In the great hall of the former North-West Station a great exhibition was opened this autumn devoted to the spirit of pogrom and the insulting of one-sixth of Vienna's population. Before a colossal caricature of humanity, labelled "The Eternal Jew", stands the mild-mannered and well-spoken Dr. Arthur von Seyss-Inquart—a man with whom I have myself sat down to dine, believing him to be a civilised, normal human being like the rest of us. And, despite his surroundings, he is still well spoken. "We do not wish", he says, "to plunge Jewish human beings and Jewish families into any material misfortune. In following our unchangeable course, we neither wish nor enjoy individual hardships which it may involve. But neither do we seek to avoid their infliction." Such is the mentality produced on Dr. Schuschnigg's "devout Catholic" by the Nazi creed.

Facing a crowd of the world's leading foreign correspondents, many of them rushed to Vienna at great expense in special airplanes because of the growingly rebellious spirit of the disappointed Vienna Nazis, stands square-jawed, hard-featured Joseph Bürckel to answer questions. He is, like all Nazis, best at dealing with a fallen foe.

"Are Schuschnigg's friends allowed to visit him?" he is asked.

"He has not a friend in the world," comes the curt reply.

"Then why not release him, since he cannot then be dangerous?"

Back comes the answer, "He will have to stand his trial for the judicial murders of Nazis."

"Why do you separate him from his wife, formerly Countess Vera Czernin?"

"I have no knowledge of the marriage. I was shocked as a good Catholic to find him living in concubinage."

A gallant reference, is it not, to a man who cannot reply, a man who by his own courageous act in refusing to flee from those before whom he felt his conscience clear has condemned himself to a living death and has consequently sought a mother for his motherless boy? Yet Bürckel is the man who has been summoned to restrain the worst brutalities of his associates. In finding Christian sanction for what an unenlightened world might be tempted to consider unchristian deeds, Bürckel has a dis-



tinguished prototype. Hear Adolf Hitler, for example, speaking just before that farcical plebiscite which was conducted by terror and open voting as a façade confirmation of the annexation of Austria a month after it had become an irrevocable fact, of which the Viennese said that the only danger was that in adding together the local successes claimed, the total would come out at 102 per cent. “*Ja*” votes. “I believe,” the Führer told the Austrians, speaking of course of himself, “that it was God’s will that this Austrian boy should have been sent to the Reich and permitted to return as a mature man to re-unite the two great sections of the German people.” And speaking of the rape of Austria in March 1938, he said: “Within three days the Lord God struck down the former rulers of this country. Everything that has happened must have been pre-ordained by the Divine Will.” (No doubt Herr Hitler is equally convinced that it was the Lord God who within one day robbed of their last penny between three and five thousand Jews and flung them out of the Burgenland province, where in many cases their ancestors had been resident for centuries.)

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And now, lest you suspect my veracity in recording horrors which in every civilised country must seem incredible, let me show you a newspaper cutting from *The Times*, not exactly a philo-Semitic or anti-Hitlerite organ.

“In Vienna and Austria no vestige of decency or humanity has checked the will to destroy, and there has been an unbroken orgy of Jew-baiting such as Europe has not known since the darkest days of the Middle Ages. In Czarist Russia pogroms were frequent, but at least they were intermittent, and the Jews were able to carry on life. In Vienna they are being rapidly forced out of every economic activity, and what was once a community outstanding in intellect and culture is being turned into a community of beggars. . . . Tens of thousands of Jews have been thrown out of employment. All important Jewish businesses have been confiscated directly or placed under an ‘Aryan’ commissar. . . . If anyone holds out, he is arrested on any charge—or no charge—and held until he signs away all his property and gives a declaration that he will ‘willingly’ leave the country within two weeks or a month. . . . There can be no Jewish family in the country which has not one or more of its members under arrest. . . . Not a day still passes without its toll of arrests and suicides. . . . The Jew is a helpless scapegoat and an outlet for the stored-up hatred of the Austrian Nazis which is not yet satisfied. . . . Thousands stand outside the Consulates, waiting through the night so that they may register their names.”

The *Völkischer Beobachter* put all this more succinctly in its issue of April 27th, writing, "Jews, abandon all hope! Our net is so fine that there is not a hole through which you can slip!" So did the Vienna *Gauleiter* Globocnik when he told the Nazis of the VIII. district of Vienna in July 1938: "The phrase that 'after all the Jews are human beings' will never have the least effect on us."

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For the present the Jews have many companions in misery, though no fate approaches theirs in the venom of the tyrant's hatred and the hopelessness of its ever being relaxed. Propagation of the claims of the legitimate ruler of the country has been declared a capital offence. Some Habsburgs are in prison, others, out of reach of the Nazis, have been charged with offences in the hope of discrediting them—the Archduke Otto with high treason, the Archduke Felix with theft. Their property has been seized and added to the loot of Austria. Alone among the Habsburgs, the Archduke Anton and his wife Ileana display the Swastika, having thrown in their lot with the violators of their country. Among the followers of the Habsburgs, not even men of the eminence and distinction of, for example, Dollfuss' Minister of War, General Prince Alois von Schönburg-Hartenstein, have escaped imprisonment. Schuschnigg's Minister of War, monarchist General Zehner, is one of those whose "suicide" has been recorded. One Archduke was eight months in Dachau.

Proudly demonstrating to the world the pleasurable orgasm which immeasurable human misery, suffering and despair provide for its devotees, this regime of barbaric savagery with which the rulers of still-civilised countries are at such pains to keep on good terms, indulges openly its exhibitionist lusts by publishing to the world pictures of its tortured victims, including those who formerly occupied the highest places in the State whose independence they defended until it was crushed beneath the thundering tanks and lusty goose-stepping thousands of the Third Reich. If you have not seen any specimens of this obtuse self-revelation, you will find a couple of the less revolting examples in the *Daily Telegraph* of August 17th, 1938, which happens to lie before me. Far more foul specimens are to be found in various numbers of the official S.S. organ, *Das Schwarze Korps*. And day after day you can share in the Nazi orgies of hatred—if you feel inclined—by looking at the endless series of

photographs published in the Vienna edition of the *Völkischer Beobachter* of their Jewish victims with the pain of two thousand years of suffering in their haunted eyes. Those among the victims who have really been guilty of crimes are of course portrayed with especial eagerness, their heads twisted into the most unfavourable posture, and touched up to bring out every evil characteristic. "The Eternal Jew", they label the product. And eternal human sympathy must reach out even to the worst of these carefully selected wrongdoers—if such they are—when one thinks of their tormentors, their little eyes glittering with lust, their tongues passing nervously over their thin lips as they gloat over and pose the victims.

Catholics *qua* Catholics are suffering less extensively than was to have been expected. The higher Catholic clergy have in the main escaped the persecution which has been the lot of their brethren in the Reich by betraying the cause of the latter and making, to their eternal shame, common cause with the invader. Over the Cathedral of St. Stephen floats for all to see the flag of surrender and the badge of their own contumely—"that Cross which is not the Cross of Christ", as their Holy Father has branded the Swastika. The fate of the workers' leaders is surrounded with mystery; the question of the real attitude of the workers is an enigma which the Nazis would give much to solve. Alternately arrested and cajoled, the leaders who have not been driven into exile are playing a waiting game. So little real foothold have the conquerors obtained amongst the working masses that even now the vast majority of the shop stewards are men who put up the Swastika only under compulsion. The Nazis deeply distrust most of them, but within their own ranks they can find few whom the workers will follow.

That the Nazis would gain a number of adherents among the unemployed was only to be expected. Almost their only working-class supporters during the years of struggle were drawn from among those whom long years of unemployment and under-feeding had so far demoralised as to make them unfaithful to working-class solidarity and willing to give anything a trial. The harnessing of the Austrian unemployed to various branches of the Third Reich's one great occupation, the preparation for war, whether directly in munition works, fortification construction, the extension through Austria towards Hungary and Czechoslovakia of Germany's great strategic roads, or indirectly

in the effort to accumulate food reserves and increase heavy industrial output, itself to be devoted to some more direct form of war industry, naturally offered opportunities for absorbing a large proportion of the unemployed. Yet this has not brought the Nazis the anticipated success with the workers, principally because it has been accompanied by a rapid drop in the standard of living towards that obtaining in the Third Reich, and by an iron regimentation which is deeply repugnant to the Austrian character. This same regimentation applied to agricultural life has produced hardly less disillusionment among the Nazi peasantry. The drastic Prussian regulations enforced on the class from which Nazism has always drawn its main support—that of the small tradesmen—has begun to undeceive even them of their hopes of the millennium. The State and municipal employees tremble for their jobs under Goering's threat to weed out all who can be brought within the elastic definition of "politically unreliable".

Not even the kernel of the Nazis—the "Old Illegals", who bore the heat and burden of the day during the five years' conspiracy against Austrian liberties—are exempt from that morning-after-the-night-before feeling which is the dominant characteristic of post-annexation Austria. The extent of their revolt against present conditions must not be exaggerated. Certainly there are many thousands of them who are completely satisfied with their share of the plunder and revelling in the licence to exercise terror unchecked against their fellow-citizens. Yet, as all the world knows, the discontent amongst the Austrian "Illegals" was sufficient in July to cause consternation in Berlin and to bring Bürckel back post-haste from the old Reich to Austria—as it would have brought Hitler himself had not the excitement aroused abroad by this dangerous state of affairs made it essential to cancel his projected trip in order to minimise the scare. At least three anti-Hitlerite issues of the old underground organ of the Illegals, the *Oesterreichische Beobachter*—I have had a copy of one in my own hands—were produced after the annexation before the secret printing-press of the malcontents was raided on the Stephansplatz and many persons arrested. Dissatisfaction, discontent and grumbling are very common amongst the Austrian Nazis, but it would be ridiculous to imagine that they imply any present prospect of serious revolutionary action. The greatest resentment is born of the

importation of those who despite similarity of blood reveal themselves more and more as foreigners in Austria. One thing is absolutely certain—that only an infinitesimal proportion among the Austrian Nazis ever dreamed that the triumph of their cause and the Anschluss were going to take the forms they have done. I was myself sitting in the home of a very staunch Austrian Nazi and former Illegal when we heard on the radio the announcement that supreme civil and military power was being placed in the hands of non-Austrians by the appointment of Bürckel as *Gauleiter* of Austria and of General von Bock as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. With considerable satisfaction I noticed him start and shake his head, saying, “But I don’t understand this—why, that means that they will be over all of us”. With incredible *naïveté* the Austrian Nazis had always imagined that they were going to be left to run their own house as they wished, and that Nazi Austria would retain its own individuality while enjoying increased strength and prestige by becoming a federated part of the Third Reich. Instead, they find their country turned into a conquered province with an army of occupation and foreign governors who by entirely foreign methods seek to exploit to the utmost limit its human and material resources. Almost the only aspect of present-day Austria in which the outside world can find real satisfaction is that of the extent to which the little traitors have themselves been betrayed by the greater traitors in whom they put their trust.

Even the plundering and outraging of the Jews are proving in some respects a boomerang. Throughout the civilised world Austrian products now share the boycott which horror at the ruthless cruelties of the Third Reich induced so many hundreds of thousands outside the ranks of the Jews themselves to support. The elimination of the Jews from commerce has thrown into inextricable confusion the Austrian export trade, particularly with Eastern Europe, in which the Jews were specialists. Tourist traffic in this great prison and torture-chamber has naturally sunk to nothing. The parsimonious Prussian, with his little parcel of *Dauerwurst* and black bread and his demands for free hot water in which to boil up the coffee *Ersatz* he has brought with him, is an unwelcome and unbeloved substitute for the well-to-do international visitor who brought such enormous revenues to independent Austria. A story they are telling in Vienna now of a Nazi *Greislerin*—proprietress of the

typical Viennese tiny general shop—who was asked how she liked the new regime, well sums up the general disappointment. “*So hab’ i’ mir des aber net vurg’sstellt*” (“This is not at all what I expected”), she replies, using the now almost universal phrase in Vienna when the new regime is under discussion. “What I expected was that they would shut up the shop of that dirty Jewish competitor of mine over the road, as of course they have, but I never imagined they were going to ruin all my good Jewish customers!”

The Viennese markets furnish a constant picture of domestic discontent owing to the rising shortage of products caused by the exigencies of under-fed Germany, which find expression in the drastic price regulations issued by the Nazis. The saleswomen on the Vienna Naschmarkt are a type for themselves, and it was no wonder that on one of the recent days of shortage half a dozen of these amply proportioned ladies should have marched around the market with their empty baskets labelled with the Nazi slogan “*Wir danken unserem Führer*”—“We thank our Leader”—until police intervened. Such little protest demonstrations have occurred in many other Austrian markets. Comparison of the present fixed prices in the Vienna markets with those freely obtaining twelve months ago show increases of from twenty per cent. for turnips up to 500 per cent. and more for lettuces. The discontent of the workers has shown itself in the frequent burning of Swastika flags in the streets of Vienna, in wage movements in a number of Vienna factories, particularly in the metal trades, which have actually resulted in strikes and the extortion of small wage increases, and in such demonstrations as the chalking up on trainloads of workers being transported to German labour camps of such slogans as “*Heil Moscow!*” These are small signs, but all the more significant since they are necessarily spontaneous. The underground machinery of the Revolutionary Socialists has been completely, that of the Communists partially, thrown out of gear by the Nazi triumph. Although copies of the Communist *Rote Fahne* are already circulating in Vienna and most Austrian provinces, and the Communist service of information already functioning, it will still be some time before reorganisation of the underground movements enables the growing discontent to be canalised and efficiently exploited against the Dictatorship. But that task, too, has been taken in hand.



To what does all this disillusion and resentment amount? Not, clearly, to any immediate attempt at an Austrian revolution, which could only result in any case in a terrible blood-bath. It does, however, make Germany's new conquest a present liability rather than an asset, especially in the event of war. The whole Austrian army traditions are opposed to the spirit of Nazism and imbued with hatred of Prussia. The deeply rooted Marxist faith of the Vienna workers and their close connections with their comrades in Czechoslovakia would have forced Germany to devote a number of divisions merely to prevent the former from actively assisting the latter if she had attacked the Czechs. And amongst the rest of the population the conqueror has already to face a widespread spirit of sullen resentment which may at any time develop into passive resistance among the aristocracy and legitimist peasantry, the bourgeois patriots who stood to the last behind Schuschnigg for the independence of their country, and the loose hangers-on of the Nazis in town and country who are everywhere echoing the words of my *Greislerin*. How far the general body of Catholics will follow the lead of Cardinal Innitzer and many of the Bishops in the betrayal of the cause for which they stood firmly by Schuschnigg until the day of his downfall is not yet evident. Probably not far, particularly in view of Nazi activity everywhere in undermining the authority of the priesthood. An effort of Innitzer to secure signatures of the lesser clergy to a document supporting his declarations to Hitler and Bürckel broke down through the refusal of the great majority to sign except in Lower Austria. Since then, Innitzer himself has learned the lesson that to placate the devil of Nazism is impossible, and is regretting that he did not find the courage to have the windows of his archiepiscopal palace broken in March as, despite his early truckling to Hitler, they were in October 1938. His sermon against the anti-Catholic measures of the Nazis provoked a great demonstration of 10,000 Catholics around Vienna Cathedral—who parodied the Nazi chant of thanks to Hitler by chorusing: “We thank our Arch-bish-op!” Then came the raid on Innitzer's palace.

What Nazi Germany is up against in Austria to-day is nothing as concrete as conspiracy or rebellion. It is that intangible and unconquerable obstacle, the resentful ill-humour of a very big proportion of the population, above all in the capital. Vienna is proving an easier city to conquer than to win.



## CHAPTER XXX

### BASTION CZECHOSLOVAKIA

THIRTY-SIX HOURS AFTER MY EXPULSION FROM AUSTRIA I landed at Croydon from the "Fugitives' Non-stop", one of those now constantly crowded planes which fly over Germany without landing, and are consequently in such demand among the growing number of persons in the world who must not, or prefer not to set foot in that country while the present regime continues. (The Jews call the plane which leads a few of the Children of Israel out of the Nazi peril the "Flying Moses".) I had been less than twenty-four hours in Prague, but it had proved long enough to reassure me, as my previous knowledge of the Czechs told me would be the case, that this undemonstrative, solid and cautious people had not been frightened, but merely hardened like Bessemer steel by the fate of Austria. I managed to crowd quite a lot of conversations with people of all classes into those few hours. There was not one who did not expect an early invasion by Germany, not one who was not grave, and not one who was afraid or who questioned whether in view of the threatening odds it would not perhaps be better to yield without resistance. They crowded round me, knowing that I had just come from Vienna, asking with unsmiling faces and in level tones: "Well, when are they coming? Whenever it is, we are ready for them. There will be no Berchtesgaden for Czechoslovakia, and whatever happens to us first, the Germans will find before the end that the river Marne flows South of the Bohemian Alps." An American who had just had an audience of President Beneš said he had been told: "I do not believe we shall ever go the way of Germany. I hope we shall never become a Spain. But one thing I can tell you for certain—we shall never be an Austria." Heartened by this spirit after witnessing the unresisting collapse of the Austrian bulwark, I landed in London—to have the heart pretty well taken out of me again in ten days by the defeatism rampant in political circles. People seemed to look on me as something between a hero and a lunatic, unable to sense the reality of danger, when I said that I was going back to Prague as quickly as possible and at my own request, although the prospect of a good job far away from the danger zone had been held out to me.

With the German army cautiously halted fifteen kilometres from the Czechoslovak frontier, the Chamberlain Government was obviously hastening to take a new German triumph for granted and to facilitate the surrender of another bulwark—the last serious obstacle between Germany and the sinews of war she needed in South-eastern Europe. After seeing the little Czechoslovak mongoose baring his teeth, it took a day or two to realise the metamorphosis of the British lion into a rabbit hypnotised by the Swastika snake. I had hoped to find people's eyes opened at last by the fate of Austria to the German peril, and to discover a determination to say very loud and clear, "Thus far and no farther". I had not expected to hear everywhere despondent voices murmuring, "Thus far, and as much farther as necessary for your schemes if only you will leave us out of it. We don't want to fight and, by Jingo, we won't, whatever your designs against our ships, our men and our money."

"Your expulsion came as a perfect godsend to the Home Office", I was told in two unconnected quarters after I landed. "They had on their books three particularly nasty Gestapo agents who are masquerading in London as journalists, and went with their names immediately to Lord Halifax, insisting that here was the perfect chance to get rid of them without scandal as a reprisal for your expulsion. They were listened to patiently and sympathetically, and then told: 'No, we can't do that. In spite of everything, I prefer the methods of the New Testament to those of the Old'."

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Newspaper cutting. "Lieutenant-Commander Fletcher (Lab. Nuneaton) and Mr. Parker (Lab. Romford) asked about the expulsion of British journalists from Austria.

"Mr. Butler said that Mr. G. E. R. Gedye had been expelled because of an article sent by him and published which was regarded as untrue by the German authorities in its figures of the number of persons imprisoned in Austria.\* The authorities of any State had the right to expel a foreign national. But H.M. Government had instructed the Ambassador in Berlin to express concern at the manner in which this right had been exercised in these circumstances in respect of a British journalist of high qualifications and established reputation."

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\* The message in question merely quoted the official figures, and said that these were only a fraction of the figures currently accepted among the population, and was published after my first expulsion order.

One night I was dining in the House, and saw there a person who had remarked to me several years before: "We shall never have peace in Europe until Beneš and all his friends are in Hell". It was therefore quite natural to hear that he was now in a position to exercise a good deal of influence over British policy towards Czechoslovakia. I talked to British statesmen and politicians, people from the War Office, famous political writers, editors and Foreign Office people about the British attitude towards Czechoslovakia. Quite simply I found it impossible to believe for a long time that the general tendency was to abandon this last bastion against German expansion to the East, and even to facilitate Germany's acquisition of it. When I asked innocent questions indicating my inability to comprehend, I was generally met with a shrug of the shoulders and the explanation:

"You see, we are not in a position to defend ourselves. Our air defences just aren't, and London lies at the mercy of any raiding force. Probably Chamberlain and his friends hope that if Germany destroys Czechoslovakia, she will go on down through the Balkans and extend eastwards in preparation for an attack on Russia. But by the time she is ready for this, they trust, we and France will be so strong that we shall be able to say to her: 'If you attack us, you will attack a strong opponent, and you know that Russia will attack you from the rear, whereas if you attack Russia, we can promise not to attack you, and to wish you luck'." But when I asked whether, then, our air strength was increasing more rapidly than that of Germany, I was told that, on the contrary, for the next few years every month would bring a proportionate gain in relative strength to her. When I asked whether it were not correct that Germany was so short of experienced officers, tank and air-force technicians and of such essential war materials as petrol, rubber and cellulose, as well as of all food reserves, that the Reichswehr constantly warned Hitler she was at present and would until 1940 or so remain unable to face a major war, I was told that it was quite true. I asked whether there was anything to stand in the way of Germany securing the needed war materials and food reserves in Hungary, Rumania and Jugoslavia, once Czechoslovakia had been eliminated, and I was told "Apparently, nothing". I asked whether it was not considered that if Britain and France said quite openly to Germany that any threat to Czechoslovakia would

oblige France and Britain to go to any necessary length to stop German aggression, this would not pull Germany up short and avert the danger of her securing merely by bluff and blackmail just what she needed to enable her to contemplate a major war against ourselves.

I was told : " Our military people and the best but least consulted opinion in the Foreign Office are convinced of it, but Mr. Chamberlain and his pro-Fascist friends profess to take the opposite view ". I asked whether, in face of the terrible danger which the opposite policy involved, the British public was not insisting on an immediate change of Government and was told : " The National Government is stronger than it has ever been. Public opinion is an ostrich with its head so well buried in the ' Vote for Chamberlain and Peace ' propaganda and the ' Would you die for Czechoslovakia ? ' racket that it sees nothing of the ultimate German threat to ourselves. Remember, too, that Britain is in its Brüning era, with a typical pre-Fascist Government ever since even Baldwin was ousted as ' too democratic for the Chamberlainites '. It is not, of course, the Fascism of coloured shirts which threatens here. What need of coloured shirts when we have the Old School Tie ? " And then I got frightened, and asked to be sent back to Prague at once, where indeed bombs might fall, but spirits were rising, and one was safe at least from demoralisation by the panic atmosphere of official London. As I flew back over Germany, I tried to console myself with the thought that before long the Opposition would succeed in opening the eyes of my fellow-countrymen to the truth and to their real interests.

Not long landed, I had a call from a good friend of mine on the Left out from London, who began to ask me lots of questions about the situation. As I told him of the strength of the Czech " Maginot Line," of the calm but unshakable determination of every individual I had met in this Republic of dour small bourgeois to defend every inch of the country against any odds, and of their supremely good modern military equipment, his face grew longer and longer.

" What have you really come out here for ? " I asked at last in my bewilderment.

" To ask Beneš," he said, " whether the best thing is not to surrender the whole Sudeten area to Germany at once."

I told him that, polite and good-humoured as was the President of the Republic, I was afraid my friend might come away with a

flea in his ear. Three days later I asked him how the interview had gone off.

"Very nicely," he said, "the President was charming and we talked for a couple of hours."

I asked him what the President had said concerning the object of his visit, the proposal that Czechoslovakia should commit suicide and destroy all hopes of independent existence by breaking up the historic lands of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, and surrendering her strong strategic frontier, her £80,000,000 worth of fortifications and the industrial districts essential to her economic survival.

"Ah, that," he said. "You see, we did not talk much about that, because Beneš said at once that it was indiscussable, and began to speak of other things."

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Czechoslovakia was a free gift flung at the heads of the General Staffs of the Western democracies—something to secure which in past wars enormous sums have seen spent, usually in vain—a natural barrier to an enemy advance, garrisoned by a people determined, supported or unsupported, to fight to the last man for the freedom which they have enjoyed for twenty years after four centuries of loss of national independence. They knew they would have had to fight to the last man, even if their French and Russian allies were loyal to their treaties with the Czechs. When Germany concluded her ten years' truce with Poland, she liberated large forces capable of moving on interior lines between the French Maginot Line and the Sudetic Alps, which latter formed the natural defences of Czechoslovakia. It was to counter-balance this that France and Czechoslovakia concluded their defensive pact with the Soviets. Germany's reply was and continued to be the bitter propaganda campaign launched by the whole Press and broadcasting machinery controlled by Goebbels in every part of the world against this solidly bourgeois Republic as an "outpost of Bolshevism". This was the meaning of Berlin's campaign in London to secure the "neutralisation"—in other words, the rendering defenceless—of Czechoslovakia. The assiduity of the German efforts was in itself proof of the vital importance of the Franco-Czechoslovak-Soviet Pacts to the entire world as a barrier against further German aggression. Russia was destined in the future war to play for Czechoslovakia the rôle which England played for France in the World War.

It was to have been Russia's part to make good Czechoslovakia's losses in men and material until the French advance into Rhineland could relieve the pressure on this little Republic. The Czechs were often told by their encouraging friends abroad that they would be overrun and destroyed within three or four days, sharing, but much more rapidly, the fate of Serbia in 1914. The Czechoslovak General Staff was absolutely confident that without any foreign assistance they could hold up the Germans (and if necessary the Hungarians also) for from three to six months. They said that their country could not be compared with Serbia. It was three times as big, and possessed a highly developed industry for war purposes of which Serbia had not one element. Czechoslovakia's forces, they said, stood indeed only as 1 to 4.5 in relation to those of Germany (with Austria), but that those of Serbia when the War broke out were as 1 to 24 as compared with those of the Central Powers. Furthermore, Serbia in 1914 was 550 kilometres away from Russia. And there were no air fleets. Czechoslovakia to-day is only 150 kilometres from Russia. The Czechoslovak military experts characterised this as "a negligible ditch" from the point of view of aerial operations. Czechoslovakia could thus be considered as the western wing of the Russian-Czechoslovak army, of which the north-eastern wing rested on the Baltic. The southern wing of the French forces on the Rhine would have been only 350 kilometres from this western wing of the Czechoslovak-Soviet army, instead of the 1400 kilometres which would have separated the French from the Russian army had it not been for Czechoslovakia.

This chapter was written at the end of August 1938. I think it may bring home more vividly to everyone the criminal folly of Chamberlain's surrender—no, not surrender, but his blasting in of the gates of the Czechoslovak bastion—before Herr Hitler at Munich if I let it stand unchanged as a picture of what in one month the National Government forced France to join in betraying. I wrote :

"That is one aspect of the military importance of Czechoslovakia. Look at the physical map of Europe, and you will see her geographical importance. Across that map stretches a mountain chain which to-day, as in the past, forms a barrier against the Teutonic hordes—the Swiss Alps, the Styrian Alps, the Sudetic Alps, the Carpathians and the Alps of Transylvania. Switzerland, Czechoslovakia and Rumania together hold this line of



bastions. Since yesterday there is a gap in it—Austria. While we looked on, that bastion fell and this breach was made in the natural defences of Britain's route to the East. The breach, however, cannot safely be used so long as Czechoslovakia with her Sudetic mountains is available—with Italy—to control the old Teutonic highway of Rhine and Main leading down into the Danubian highway, or so long as Czechoslovakia and Poland stand astride the old Teutonic-Mongolian highway leading from the North to the Danube basin through the gateway of Moravia, or as long as, together with Rumania, Czechoslovakia blocks the old Mongolian route which leads from the East through the Eastern Carpathians to the Danube basin. Let Czechoslovakia be destroyed, and these three ancient military highways will be opened, to enable Germany to dominate the whole basin of the Danube. Was it not old Bismarck himself who said : ' He who controls Bohemia controls Europe ' ?

“ Czechoslovakia is the corner-stone of the Little Entente—threatened with disruption through German intrigue, but still existing, with its population of 50 millions. Were the Little Entente politically more solid, it would be the second largest Power in Europe in area and the third largest according to the number of its inhabitants. Its united armed forces would rank fourth among European armies. Without Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Jugoslavia lose the power to defend the Danube basin. If Germany secures control of the Little Entente by the destruction of Czechoslovakia, the Balkan Entente States must fall into her lap like a ripe plum, and bring her right down through Asia Minor to the frontiers of Britain's Asiatic possessions. That is why Germany, after concluding her ten years' armistice with Poland, turned the big guns of propaganda or intrigue, or both, on to Austria, the Little Entente, particularly Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. That is why Italy, until Mussolini had the stupidity to allow Germany to encourage him into the disastrous entanglements of Abyssinia and Spain, mounted guard over Austria. While Britain looked on, Germany placed her hand on Austria and vaulted the barrier of the Alps. Now she stands at the foot of the Balkan mountains and at the gate of the Lesser Hungarian Plain. While Britain looks on, she is preparing to repeat this manoeuvre by overleaping the Sudetic Alps. And the main aim of British policy proves to be to help her to surmount this barrier between herself and Britain's Asiatic possessions without having to pay



even the price of fighting her way through. Yet it is the last bastion. If it goes, nothing is left to prevent Germany from sweeping through to India, destroying the British Empire, to erect a world Empire of her own, vaster than anything of which Frederick the Great or William II ever dreamed.

“Here is how that brilliant French writer ‘Pertinax’ viewed the situation in *L’Europe Nouvelle* in August 1938 :

“‘. . . To-day we know the substance of the interview of Adolf Hitler’s aide-de-camp, Captain Wiedemann, with Lord Halifax on July 19th, some hours before the departure of the British Sovereigns for France. Captain Wiedemann was instructed to tell the Secretary of State that his master had no intention of annexing the German Sudetic districts (territorial autonomy, plebiscite were passed over in silence) and that he would like to open immediately negotiations to regulate the questions in suspense between England and the Reich. If necessary, Field-Marshal Göring could be delegated to London in order to effect an agreement with the British Cabinet. Lord Halifax posed a preliminary condition; negotiations could not usefully be begun until the Czechoslovak business had been peacefully settled. . . . The Wiedemann-Halifax interview shows that the man placed at the head of Germany perseveres in his methods, seeking to divide the two great Western Powers.

“‘. . . At present the mission of Lord Runciman has pride of place. The mechanism of the Czechoslovak affair has been changed. Formerly, the determination which the French Government proclaimed on every occasion to fulfil its obligations under the treaty of October 16th, 1925, was the fundamental consideration. It involved the British as well as the French people—remember the speech of Mr. Neville Chamberlain of March 24th. Now everything will depend on the Runciman report. . . . It should be known that the Cabinet of London, claiming to act on the basis of the Franco-British Agreement of April 29th, which foresees an effort at conciliation, imposed this method of mediation. That Cabinet imposed it on France. Towards June 15th, the French Ministers discouraged this initiative (which had been revealed in a note of the Foreign Office), underlining that it could only encourage Konrad Henlein and his friends in the maximum of intransigence. But on July 20th, Lord Halifax confronted [the French Cabinet] with a *fait accompli*. The day before, instructions had been sent to Sir Basil Newton, the British Minister in Prague [ignoring M. Jan Masaryk the Czechoslovak Minister in London]. The Cabinet of London imposed its decision equally on President Beneš, whom Sir Basil Newton was ordered to see personally. If the President of the Czechoslovak Republic had ventured to reject the British offer, he would have had to face the immediate publication of his refusal, which could not have failed to alienate the British and to put difficulties in the way of French assistance. On the other hand,

it should be insisted here, the mediation of Lord Halifax does not at all suppress the assurances given to French policy, not only in the Anglo-French conference of April 29th, but also later.

“ ‘ At first Britain agreed to stand by France if, while the effort at conciliation was being made, Germany should attempt to employ force. This was indicated to the Wilhelmstrasse on May 20th, in the morning.’

“ (It might here be mentioned that when the German Ambassador in Paris called on M. Daladier that same day, Daladier showed him the French order of mobilisation which was lying on his table and told him : ‘ It depends solely on Germany’s action whether or not I sign this forthwith ’.)

“ ‘ In the second place the British statesmen have recognised that the compromise between the Czechoslovak Cabinet and the Sudeten Germans must not affect either the sovereignty of Prague or its foreign policy. It goes without saying that having received his mandate—in fact, if not in legal form—from the British Cabinet, Lord Runciman will not be able to liberate himself and will not be able to go beyond the promises which it gave. Plebiscite, territorial autonomy or the neutralisation of the country (proposed by London at the beginning of June but refused by France) would hardly be compatible with these promises. This was the general sense of the instructions sent on July 25th to M. Corbin, the French Ambassador in London. They do not seem to have been contested.

“ ‘ . . . At the moment the question of time must be weighing heavily on the Führer. Is time working for or against a Germanic Central Europe? If the Führer delays until the autumn, will he not become a prisoner of peace? And could his regime fit in with such a *denouement*? On the other hand, should he take the risk of defeat in order to maintain his regime? It is frightful to think that these notes of interrogation surge day and night through a head which is not at all normal—although it has been revealed that it is much more calculating than was generally supposed—and which is seldom visited by sleep.’

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“ What else would be given away, if Czechoslovakia goes? For one thing, a munitions industry whose output is greater than that even of Italy. The Germans call Czechoslovakia ‘ the arsenal of the world ’ on account of her large sales of surplus munitions abroad. Czechoslovakia possesses about half the war-material potential of the Eastern part of Central Europe. Her disappearance would be a serious blow to Hungary, Rumania, Jugoslavia and Bulgaria, who between them produce annually only 1,500,000 tons of iron and steel for their 48,000,000

inhabitants. Germany desires Czechoslovakia's war industry (which incidentally produces for the British army the Bren machine gun) as she did that of Belgium in 1914, but the consequences of her success for Czechoslovakia's allies and neighbours would be infinitely graver than was the loss of the Belgian plant during the War. With Czechoslovakia would go an important system of permanent fortifications ranking only after those of France and Germany. They are of ultra-modern type, for up till 1932-1933, when the Disarmament Conference broke down and the German Republic gave place to the Nazi Dictatorship of Hitler, the country was completely unfortified. Then, under the supervision and on the advice of the French constructors of the Maginot Line, Czechoslovakia began her high-speed work on fortifications as a reply to Germany's increasing her peace-time army by two hundred per cent. through the introduction of conscription and compulsory labour corps. Parallel with this went intensive preparation to resist attack by modern arms. The Germans estimate officially that Czechoslovakia's twenty tanks of 1933 have been increased to-day to between 400 and 600, that her air force had increased from 750 planes in 1933 to 1500 by 1937, produced in eight factories. Germany estimates Czechoslovakia's air personnel at 10,000 (her own is estimated at 80,000 to 100,000, the British at 70,000 and the Russian at 150,000). Czechoslovakia's mechanised transport and artillery of all types are the most modern in Europe; military attachés in Prague usually consider that the Czechoslovak army is without exception the best equipped in Europe. Germany estimates its strength at 200,000 fully trained men, with 1,000,000 in the First Reserve and 300,000 in the Second Reserve—a total of 1,500,000 capable of bearing arms. With the auxiliary troops, the Germans estimate that Czechoslovakia is able to call 2,000,000 men to the colours. In September 1914 France, with a population of 40,000,000, had seventy-four divisions in the line; Czechoslovakia, with 15,000,000 inhabitants, can put into line twenty-eight fully equipped divisions, and in addition cavalry and mountain brigades. As to morale, while there are to-day constant desertions across the frontier, despite the terrible risks, of German Reichswehr soldiers to Czechoslovakia, no Czechs desert in the other direction. It is true that a great majority of Czechoslovakia's German subjects would be not merely dis-

affected in case of war with Germany, but would do all in their power to help the enemy. But this Czechoslovakia has always reckoned with, and if anyone knows the best technical methods of handling such a situation, it should be the Czechs, who were themselves in exactly the same position *vis-à-vis* Austria-Hungary from 1914 to 1918. Apart from the German elements, the Czechoslovak army can be relied upon to resist a German invasion with fanatic individual courage and personal enthusiasm.

“So high an opinion have the German military experts of Czechoslovakia’s war potential that they believe the Franco-Czechoslovak Treaty obliges Czechoslovakia in case of war immediately to take the offensive against Germany. The well-known German military writer Marcomanus says: ‘The Czech bloc constitutes for Germany such a danger in case of war that the best possible solution would be to destroy Bohemia as a great nut is crushed in the jaws of nut-crackers. But the kernel of this nut is the tough Czech nation which has a great and modernly equipped army.’ Not the least important feature of Czechoslovakia’s preparedness for defence is the power given to the ‘Supreme Council for the Defence of the State’. Such are its powers that in time of war all members of the Government have to take their orders from it.”

That is how, writing at the end of August last, I summed up on the basis of reliable statistics the potential strength of Czechoslovakia and what would be lost if this bastion of European peace were betrayed to the German aggressor. How fast betrayal worked! You know the changes which one month brought. You did not “have to fight for Czechoslovakia”. Mr. Chamberlain saved you and destroyed for all time Czechoslovakia’s power and even will to help you fight against Germany. Mr. Chamberlain brought you back peace—with dishonour—from Munich. He deprived you for ever of the support of the one and a half million men whom Czechoslovakia had under arms—better and more modern arms than you yourself have got. He forced this broken-hearted little country to surrender without even the chance that the Abyssinians had with their bow-and-arrow army of defending themselves, a line of the best natural fortresses in Europe strengthened by an ultra modern system of almost impregnable fortifications in which £80,000,000 had been sunk—your bastion against the German threat to your Empire. And just a week after you had sent off Chamberlain

to Berchtesgaden with the vociferous admonition "Stand by Czecho!", you poured out in vast hysterical crowds to cheer to the echo the man who had "saved" you. You did not realise—how should you?—that he had saved you from calling Hitler's bluff by warning him that any attack on this bastion would confront him with the iron ring of Britain, France, Russia and Czechoslovakia—with the United States not far behind. You did not realise that he had saved you, in the remote possibility of Hitler's fearing to have his bluff called and risking his whole tyrannous regime on the desperate throw of war, from having this tremendous bastion in your hands, so that one day you would have to face him when it had fallen into his. You did not realise that Mr. Chamberlain had perhaps saved you from ever having to fight Germany at all, only in order that you should have to surrender step by step everything that Germany should require of you, including the liberty of your Press, your right to chose your own Government and to live outside a concentration camp, and in order that you should have finally to fight within Hitler's Four-Power Pact against the might of Soviet Russia. So when you do have to fight Hitler or submit to Hitler dismembering your Empire as Chamberlain helped him to dismember Czechoslovakia, it is you the Skoda guns will be shelling instead of Hitler. So you will send back Chamberlain and his colleagues with a bumper majority at the next election with the slogan "Vote for Chamberlain, a sound skin and die in your beds!" You will, won't you? Of course you will, for England expects that every man this day applauds surrender. And, as Mr. Chamberlain has said to Mr. Attlee, to criticise the results of his policy as "defeat" is to foul your own nest in a way, as he said enviously, which would not be possible in a totalitarian State

Eternal vigilance was indeed the price of peace for Czechoslovakia. The German schemes for attack were well known. The German General Staff plan to be put into operation was that for a *Blitzkrieg*—a "Lightning War". At the word "go" the German troops permanently under arms were to converge upon Czechoslovakia. Marching out through the gates of barracks and camps towards the objective, battalions—according to a complicated and detailed plan—were to merge themselves into regiments, regiments into brigades, brigades into divisions and divisions into army corps as motorised units, tanks, artillery, technical troops,

supply columns and supporting airplanes blended into one harmonious whole to hurl themselves with a terrific impact upon the Czechoslovak "Maginot Line". Simultaneously the skies over Prague and every important railway junction were to be blackened with Germany's hosts of airplanes and these centres blotted out of existence. As a postscript, a declaration of war and orders of mobilisation were to follow. The German General Staff, passing conveniently over the lessons from Spain of the strength of the defence and the limitations of the power of the air arm, professed to believe that all would be over within a week, and tried to convince the military attachés of the Western Powers that it was true.

This is the menace under which Czechoslovakia was living from the night of March 11th, 1938, if not before it, and took all possible measures to meet. Germany had to expect as an immediate reply the bombing and possible shelling by long-range guns of Dresden, Leipzig, Breslau and Vienna; a French general mobilisation, if not invasion of the Rhineland, was to have held a large portion of her army there while Russian air-fleets, using Lithuania and Czechoslovakia as their bases, rained bombs upon Berlin and every other easily accessible German military and air centre. Do you remember Poland's little ultimatum to Lithuania the other day, and how under the menace of Russia's unqualified threats she hurriedly withdrew from the position she had taken up? The German General Staff, at whose instigation Poland had acted in trying to "jump the claim" in Lithuania, remembers this check extremely well.

I myself twice saw the proofs of Czechoslovak preparedness for defence and military efficiency in the dramatic events of May 21st. The well-organised "whispering propaganda" of the Henlein Party, one of Hitler's most potent instruments for keeping Czechoslovak nerves on edge in pursuance of the same old "wearing-down tactics" which brought about the downfall of Schuschnigg, had constantly fixed dates for "liberation" by a German invasion. Consequently the rumours that the first of three batches of the Czechoslovak municipal elections fixed for Sunday, May 22nd, would be prevented by a German invasion the day before caused little serious concern in Prague. On Thursday, May 19th, however, they were given substance by information of a very different character. On that day the Czechoslovak Military Intelligence Section received definite



proofs that Germany had eleven divisions at war strength, with all technical troops, mostly in barracks and hutments, concentrated along the Czechoslovak frontiers. The centre of operations was apparently located near Chemnitz. Next day, Friday, the British Military Intelligence Service was able to confirm for itself the information passed on to it by the Czechoslovak General Staff. It was learned in Prague that Germans there had been warned to leave by Friday. On Friday afternoon an emergency Cabinet Council was called in Prague by the President, Dr. Edouard Beneš. The military authorities demanded the calling out of five-year classes of reservists. But meantime the Czechoslovak Government had been put in possession of certain half-assurances extracted with great difficulty from the Nazi Government in Berlin by the British Ambassador, Sir Neville Henderson, after Ribbentrop had first met him with open threats of war. They persuaded the Chief of Staff to be satisfied with the summoning of one-year class of fully trained reservists, together with all technicians.

Within five and a half hours of the decision being taken, the "Maginot Line" and all frontier defences had been fully garrisoned by the troops already under arms, while mobilisation of the reserves was got under way. All through that Friday night the reservists were being sent off in special trains, many of which rolled past my house overlooking the main line to Karlsbad. The mobilisation proved a model of smooth efficiency. I did not see an unhappy face as wives embraced husbands and mothers sons at the crowded stations, though everyone knew that war was in the air. Next morning the Sudeten Germans knew it too, as the long lines of tanks, mechanised transport and artillery moved forward into their war stations near the frontier. Plans of the Henleinists discovered by the police showed that the Sudeten Nazis had in every district compiled lists of all German democrats, Socialists and Communists, as well as of Czechs of all parties, and were planning to round up and arrest them on the anticipated arrival of the Reichswehr. Eye-witnesses have told me of the astonishing scenes in two villages where the white-stockinged Nazis, on receiving the news that troops in steel helmets and tanks were approaching, hastily paraded and marched out joyfully to greet—the hated armies of the Republic! I know of one little town, too, where the local ladies of Nazi society sat up all night in their best dresses



to greet the arrival of the Führer, only to change them as rapidly as the men their white stockings at the news that the invasion was very definitely "off". Certainly on this occasion—thanks, apparently, in part to the absence of the worst of the "surrender gang" from Downing Street and the temporary resumption of old positions by others—Britain, and of course Czechoslovakia's ally France gave valuable backing to Czechoslovakia, gratitude for which was not entirely destroyed by subsequent British pressure exercised in a defeatist direction in Prague and the incessant campaign of abuse in the pro-Nazi section of the British Press until the final betrayals of Berchtesgaden and Munich. But to this sturdy little Republic belongs the main credit for administering on its own account the first check which Adolf Hitler has ever known in his long course of triumphant aggression. "May 21st, 1938," I wrote here in August last, "is a date which if Czechoslovakia be not crippled by her 'friends' may prove a turning-point in European history."

It is no wonder that against this stout-hearted and well-equipped people who stood in the way of her dreams of hegemony, Germany carried on war by all means short of actual military operations for years before the actual blow was struck via Chamberlain. These means were fully described by the German Professor of Military Science, Banse, in his book "Germany, Prepare for War", the English translation of which Germany made such efforts to suppress. In it, Banse explains the methods of "peace-time" preparations for war which were being employed against Czechoslovakia, in order to isolate her by creating difficulties between Czechoslovakia on one side and France, Yugoslavia and Rumania on the other, while rousing public opinion in Britain and Italy to hostility against this country. At the same time Banse urges that disruptive propaganda should be set at work within the country itself "to dissolve the united mass of the enemy people". He goes on to recommend the creation of "Fifth Columns". "Auxiliary posts must be established in the capital. Writers of the country must be got hold of and influence exercised through Press, film and radio. Clubs, social centres and reading-rooms can all be brought into this service. Above all, whispering propaganda (*Flüsterpropaganda*) should be organised through native agents."

One side of these tactics was revealed in the assiduous German support and exaggeration of all internal political differences in Czechoslovakia and in German intrigues with the reactionaries among the Czechoslovak Agrarians. Another side appeared in the unscrupulous efforts of Germany to present this State to the hundreds of millions who had never visited it as a "centre of Bolshevism", and therefore an international danger to all capitalist States. How many of those who allow the bogey of international communism to disturb their sleep o' nights ever reflect on the dangers of the Fifth International, the Fascist International, which stirs up class warfare by its mobilisation of reactionary feeling in all democratic countries in order to weaken their unity to resist the aggression of Germany and her Fascist allies? Czechoslovakia's alliances were with Russia and France, not with the Third International and French Freemasonry; she knew that to listen to the honeyed whispers of "neutralisation" and "cantonalisation" would have been to condemn herself to the fate of Belgium in 1914 and worse, without gaining the loyalty of a single additional German subject. That loyalty, which Switzerland acquired in the course of centuries, she could not hope to secure overnight by the acceptance of advice from those who made little secret of the fact that they were prepared to go to any length to placate Germany and preserve peace—provided Czechoslovakia footed the bill. Czechoslovak leaders expected no altruism, and saw entirely the reasonableness of any British statesman being ready to sacrifice Czechoslovak interests to those of his own country. They only failed to find it reasonable that they should be expected to be equally ready to do so themselves, and that any British statesmen should refuse to see that with the sacrifice of Czechoslovakia they would sacrifice the last substantial barrier to Germany's attacking the Empire at its most sensitive point.

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"Austria was destroyed", I wrote in this chapter last August, "while Britain looked on, refusing to do anything in her defence. If the fall of the Austrian bastion is followed by the storming of that of Czechoslovakia, it can be carried through only as the result of outside pressure destroying the value of this little country's defensive alliances and forcing her to surrender the Sudeten areas. There lie the Alps which

protect her from Germany, there lies the third most formidable line of defence works in Europe. Are there really British statesmen prepared actively to contribute to the loss of this bastion because of the wishful thought that this would purchase peace? Are there really such who have studied *Mein Kampf* so little that they imagine the conquest of this bastion standing before Britain's eastern possessions would really halt and not accelerate the German hegemonic movement?

“ Apparently there are, if it be true that Lord Halifax in the summer of 1938 told Daladier in Paris that ‘ the French alliance with Czechoslovakia is at present the greatest danger to European peace ’. Put into other words, unless Czechoslovakia could have her claws clipped and her teeth drawn before Hitler pounced, there was a danger of her being so *méchante* as to defend herself. Yet in defending herself she would be defending an outpost of Britain. Almost concurrently with the reported expression of the above view in Paris, the Czechs were being told in London that, treaty or no treaty, the French nation would never fight in their defence. Yet it seems to be fully realised in London that Germany cannot face a major war for a couple of years yet, and this is what an attack on Czechoslovakia would involve unless she could be forced into ‘ neutralisation ’ and the loss of her protective alliances.

“ So then what? You and I might think that the answer would be ‘ Then at all costs let us maintain peace by strengthening such alliances and even by leaving Germany no room for doubt that when these have to be put into effect she will find Britain also at the side of those prepared to prevent or punish a breach of the peace ’. Apparently you and I would be wrong. Hitler, it seems, must on no account be balked. It is the same line of thought that has for two years employed ‘ non-intervention ’ in Spain as a cover for the Italo-German war of aggression against the Spanish people which if successful must result in establishing a new outpost of the Fascist bloc on the flank of France, which acquiesced in the rape by Japan and Italy of Manchuria and Abyssinia. For if Hitler proved unable to continue the long series of foreign political successes with which he flatters national pride in Germany into forgetting personal griefs, the day of reckoning might come when the Nazi dictatorship would have to account to the German masses for all the tyranny of the last five years. Rather than this, apparently,

one must be prepared to surrender any defensive position, to cajole, flatter and appeal to the 'better nature' of the Nazi war lords lest they themselves be overthrown. For who knows who else in Europe might not strike a blow for liberty if the German masses secured it!"

How right, how foully, damnably right I was in all this!

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Extract from my mail bag. Letter from a stranger in New York who had written to me in May asking a series of questions about Czechoslovakia :

Brooklyn, N.Y.  
September 22nd, 1938.

DEAR MR. GEDYE,

It is with an unhappy pen that I again write to you, now that this brutal butchering of the Republic is all but completed.

I am reminded of your fateful words of a few months ago [in May] when I addressed certain questions to you on the then coming crisis. I asked if, in your opinion, the Sudeten problem could be worked out within the framework of the State—and your prophetic words came back. "Yes, if Chamberlain is not successful in his plan to throw Czechoslovakia to the German wolf-pack."—Words, the meaning of which I could not fully appreciate at that time, for it was inconceivable that there could be such a combination of perfidy by the English and shamefulness by the French.

Now the unhappy thing is all but consummated, and Chamberlain—in complete surrender to Hitler—intimates that he carries with him demands, as though one who has already surrendered may demand anything.

Little satisfaction rests in the conviction that few weeks shall pass before the full force of retribution shall fall upon the heads of those who have so foolishly compromised themselves with Hitler, for that retribution shall fall on all of us.

It lays the groundwork for an all-powerful Germany—and Germany under the conscienceless leadership of Hitler now opens a new era for Europe in which we may well lay any hope of justice and nobility gently in the casket with the Republic of Czechoslovakia.

And so to you, Sir, my unhappy greetings—to the people of Czechoslovakia my deep sympathy, for I join with them in the bitter resentment they so justly feel.

Sincerely

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## CHAPTER XXXI

### HOLDING THE BASTION

ONE OF THE FAVOURITE LINES OF ARGUMENT OF GAULEITER Chamberlain to excuse the betrayal of the bastion of Czechoslovakia to his friend and Führer Adolf Hitler (what a joy it was the day before Godesberg to hear for once a word of truth on the German radio when it described the intermingling of German and British flags for the reception of "the two Führer") is that nothing could anyway have been done to save Czechoslovakia. On the last day of the parliamentary debate on the betrayal, he found even the splendid audacity to say: "We saved Czechoslovakia from destruction. To accuse us of having betrayed Czechoslovakia is simply preposterous. What we did was to save her from annihilation and give her a chance of a new life."

What is the truth in all this? I think I cannot do better than reveal the outlines of the Allied plans for a defence of Czechoslovakia against a German invasion. Now that it is all over, and that Chamberlain has ensured the use in the next war by Germany of Skoda guns, as Beneš so often in the past years warned British and French statesmen would be the result of such a betrayal as finally occurred, it can harm no one to show the strength of the bastion betrayed to the enemy. I give them as I learned them from an authoritative quarter in strict confidence in August 1938.

The popular idea that the German surprise attack on Czechoslovakia would take the form of closing the famous pincers from somewhere about Ostrava in the north and Znaim in the south was held in Czechoslovakia to be untenable for several reasons. Firstly, Germany could not count on Poland going into the war on her side so long as Poland knew that to move against Czechoslovakia would bring an invasion by the Russian Red Army. To put this pincer operation into motion, Germany would have been forced to concentrate great masses of troops in the comparatively narrow strip along the Oder in which lie Breslau and Opeln. Such concentration in this limited

area would have been known to Czechoslovakia from the very moment it began, thus rendering a surprise attack quite impossible. Secondly, these troops would have been in an extremely bad position in the case of a determined Czechoslovak counter-attack from the neighbourhood of Liberec towards the Polish frontier, which would have cut them off from the rest of Germany. Thirdly, from the time that Poland began to adopt a doubtful attitude towards Czechoslovakia and to make her peace with Germany four years ago, the Czechoslovak defences from the western end of the Carpathians past Těšín (Tetschen) and right along as far as the frontier opposite Breslau where the "pincers attack" could develop had been tremendously strengthened. Fourthly, the pincers attack would have demanded a huge concentration of troops in and east of Vienna. Here again all element of surprise would have been ruled out owing to the eagerness of hundreds of thousands of discontented Austrians to supply the fullest information to Czechoslovakia. Supposing, as the Germans believed, that the Czechoslovak defences against an invasion from Austria were not as powerful as those created against the pincer attack in the north, they were still far more advanced than the defences against an eventual counter-attack which had been built up by the Germans in this region. Yet it would have been essential for the Germans to be sure that Czechoslovakia could not try to put into operation some part of her original plan of defence before the annexation of Austria (which was to take up a line west of Vienna, while the Austrians fought a delaying action for two weeks against the German advance). Until the annexation of Austria, defences against Czechoslovakia here were non-existent, whereas the Czechs always had their secondary defences. Czechoslovakia always reckoned with a German annexation of Austria as the ultimate danger, and if she was taken by surprise in February 1938, it was only to the extent that she believed Schuschnigg could have held out a year or so longer. Every day after Schuschnigg's visit to Berchtesgaden on February 12th, 1938, saw work intensified on the defences at this vulnerable spot. Germany, on the other hand, had neither strategic roads nor railways for the conveyance of troops to this area, but was working at the utmost speed to construct these. A German troop concentration here would have been in a delicate position unless Hungary's co-operation in a war had been

assured, since to some extent the troops would also have been exposed to a Czechoslovak flank assault from the neighbourhood of Bratislava. Participation of Hungary was extremely unlikely owing again to the existence of the Russian and Little Entente alliances. A motorised Russian army corps setting out through a corridor across Northern Rumania—which Rumania would have not refused and could at no time have been in a strong enough position to oppose—could have been in Budapest within four days from leaving the line of the Carpathians, allowing for a speed of only 100 km. a day, which is a very low estimate; Hungary had no fortifications, and only very inferior armaments. However benevolent the neutrality of Hungary, Rumania and Poland might have been towards Germany, the Russian alliance and the tremendous fear of the Russians, both as such and as Communists, which prevails in both countries could have been relied on to prevent them from leaving the line of neutrality.

How, then, was Germany to prepare a surprise attack on Czechoslovakia? Behind Chemnitz, around Halle, Magdeburg, Kassel and well East of Marburg, in the centre of the country, it would not have been difficult unobtrusively to concentrate considerable forces. In view of the general good work of the Czechoslovak intelligence service, this would also, in all probability, have become known to Prague, but not with the same ease and certainty. If a *Blitzkrieg* had been attempted, it was from there across the Erzgebirge, with possibly a flanking attack through the Böhmerwald, that the main drive would have come. The dress rehearsal of the mobilisation on May 21st enabled the Czechoslovak General Staff to man the frontier defences at lightning speed, after which all noticeable defects in the plan were corrected in accordance with the experience then gained. Germany's mobilisation plans were inferior (unwieldy, complicated) to those of 1914, as her dress rehearsal on the invasion of Austria established. Czechoslovakia never intended to take her final stand on the Czechoslovak-German frontier along the Erzgebirge. What she had to do here was to fight a delaying action to hold up the invader during the period of between one and two weeks she would require to complete her mobilisation. Her General Staff were certain that she could delay the Germans in this area, whatever forces they put against her, for a period of approximately three weeks before being driven back into



the so-called—but wrongly so-called—"Maginot Line". The French Maginot Line aims at being absolutely impregnable to attack, and not a foot of ground is to be yielded. The Czechoslovak defences, commonly miscalled "Maginot Line", were defences in depth, consisting of a series of alternative positions prepared—approximately—from the "language frontier" up to quite close to Prague. In these, one after the other, the Czech troops were to take their stand, prepared to yield ground at a high cost rather than fight the final action here. In all this area there was practically nothing of military value left for the Germans to take over. The Skoda munition production had so far as possible been entirely transferred to Slovakia, leaving in Pilsen little more than automobile and locomotive works. All preparations had been completed for the destruction of anything remaining in the area which could possibly serve the Germans. It was also clear from the proximity of the deepest lines to Prague that in the course of the German advance it would have been impossible to protect the capital from coming into the field of operations; all preparations had been made for an early transfer of the greater number of Ministries to a secluded place in the interior, the name of which had been given to me in confidence, and for the evacuation of half the population of Prague immediately on the outbreak of hostilities. To carry through the pincers attack would have required a concentration of fifteen to twenty divisions in the Brěslau-Oppeln area in the north, and ten divisions would have been largely immobilised and practically incapable of being moved along interior lines to other areas of hostilities.

It may be assumed that the German attack would have been made towards the south-east from Leipzig under the guise of a "police action" or "effort to rescue tortured German brothers". When the Germans had fought their way through to the Czech language frontier, their plan was to call a halt and offer peace to the rump of Czechoslovakia (after proclaiming the annexation of the Sudeten areas) on humiliating and impossible terms. Only when this was rejected would it have been possible for Germany to proceed with the pincers attack in the endeavour to cut Czechoslovakia in two. Before this, however, she would have needed to be assured that Czechoslovakia's allies France and Russia had broken their alliances and would not help her, that Britain (which seemed more than doubtful after Chamber-

lain's declaration on March 24th) would have remained neutral, and that Italy—whom Germany never has trusted and never can trust completely—would also remain neutral. Now there could be no question, as Soviet Russia told Germany in August, but that from the opening day of hostilities she would begin to fulfil her treaty obligations. There was full confidence that the French would be loyal and that their General Staff would also take prompt military measures which would aid Czechoslovakia. Germany would have needed a full month to complete her huge mobilisation.

The first effect of Russia entering the war would have been the immobilisation of Germany's standing forces and reserves in East Prussia to resist the Russian attack. Here 100,000 men would have been held up and cut off from the rest of Germany. Around and east of Berlin in Pomerania she would have had another big force immobilised with reserves, also to resist the Russian advance. The declaration of war by France would have immobilised very strong forces in the Siegfried Line and between it and the Rhine. It was constantly asked "What would France—and eventually Britain—do from so far away to aid Czechoslovakia? The French could never fight their way through the Siegfried Line and cross the Rhine." The answer is that before the question of France being able to cross the Rhine arose, the Germans would have been prevented from crossing it to defend the left bank of the Rhine. It would have been the task of the French, and eventually of the British aviation, to render the Rhine bridges impassable for troops, and eventually to destroy them, rendering it impossible to reinforce the Siegfried Line on the left bank. It must be remembered that up till 1936 Germany had no defences of any kind in the demilitarised Rhineland zone. She has only had a couple of years in which to start training her reserves in this area. The Siegfried Line is "constructed in depth" between the French frontier and the Rhine. This great German river may eventually prove fatal to the defence of the German Rhenish Westphalian industrial area against attack, as German military experts know very well.

The immobilisation of forces in other parts of the country would have left the Germans with not more than thirty to forty divisions to throw against Czechoslovakia. The Germans calculated that within three weeks the Czechs could have between

thirty and forty divisions available to meet the German thrust. Such resistance would have required at least sixty divisions to crush.

On the question as to whether Czechoslovakia was able to protect all her important railway junctions for mobilisation purposes in Moravia and Bohemia, the answer was that the mobilisation on May 21st was carried through almost entirely by road in this area. There were good anti-aircraft defences for these centres and for Prague. But the rôle of the Czechoslovak air force was principally co-operation with the army in the field—the force was particularly strong in fighters—and the protection of the railway connections and junctions to carry through mobilisation in Slovakia and Ruthenia and bring these reserves to bear on the Western front. To these two objectives everything else had to be subjected.

The Russian alliance was the keystone to Czechoslovakia's hopes of emerging on the winning side. For that same reason, of course, it was made the forefront of the German five-year campaign of lies and abuse. It prevented Poland and Hungary from joining Germany, as they would otherwise have gladly done, in an attack on Czechoslovakia. It braced and held together the Little Entente, in which Czechoslovakia was the *Vermittler* between Russia and these States—the same rôle which Turkey, through her Russian alliance, plays in the Balkan Entente. Russia immobilised two large blocks of German troops (and the French a third), in addition crippling Germany's anti-aircraft defence, which had to fear the "pendulum trips" of Russian bombers. Berlin was more gravely menaced by Russian airplanes coming from the Russian frontier and from Lithuania than was Prague from Berlin. The latest Russian bombers are constructed to cover a distance of 2000 kilometres towards the objective and to return another 2000. These Russian bombers, however, would not have had to make the long return journey to and from Russia or Lithuania. They would have had only to make the single trip from Lithuania across East Prussia, pausing over Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, Breslau or Munich to pay their respects and continuing on to land in safety in Northern Czechoslovakia, where they would have refuelled, reloaded with bombs and taken the same course homewards with the same unloading on the route. From the first day Russia would also have been sending in reinforcements

of bombing planes across Rumania or Poland and Eastern Czechoslovakia to replace Czech losses. The question of whether Rumania would have allowed her railways to be used by Russia—which was so much canvassed abroad—hardly arose, as the railway in its present state is of no military value. Assistance would have arrived via the air and the motorised corps. The frequent questions put as to whether Rumania would agree were called “indiscreet”. The French General Staff was quite satisfied on this score. Only fools could have expected Rumania to turn against herself the whole fury of the anti-Comintern league, plus Hungary and Poland—doubtless also that of the Britain of *Gauleiter* Chamberlain—by signing an agreement in advance to accord this right to Russia.

What is the value of the Red Armies to-day? The efficiency factor of the Russian military forces has multiplied five times since the days of the Czar. So said the Czechoslovak experts, and they *had* to know. The recent purges removed “revolutionary” friends of politicians and allowed of their replacement by loyal and disciplined officers. Napoleon’s frequent purges of his army which increased efficiency on every occasion are often overlooked—also the fact that until the French Revolution had given Frenchmen something to fight for, the French armies were beaten in every campaign. Their armament was good, their defences were good, their cost enormous—but the readiness of the individual soldier and, the most important person of all, the subaltern section commander, to sacrifice their lives for the cause, had to be created by the liberating French Revolution. As to technical efficiency, on mobilisation under the Czars it took the peasant on an average five days to reach any place with a railway to start mobilisation. Even in European Russia another nine to ten days were needed to form up units, another fifteen to get on the march towards the frontier after the lapse of a month. To-day, the *Kolkose*, or collective farms, are organised collectively not only for agriculture, but also for mobilisation. On this being decreed, the peasant recruits simply load up in the motor transport of the *Kolkose* and proceed to mobilisation centres. The mobilisation of an army corps, it is claimed, can be completed in from four to six days. Within fifteen days a motorised army corps could have been on the frontier to start offensive operations. From the Russian frontier to Prague is only 900 km. So that at the

rate of 100 km. a day Russian reinforcements would have been here within at most three weeks from the date of mobilisation. And the Czechoslovak General Staff was utterly confident that the German advance through Bohemia and Moravia could have been held up for three weeks. But Russia's standing forces of motorised troops on the frontiers—and two motorised army corps—could have been in Prague even quicker—within fifteen days of the outbreak of hostilities. Meantime French mobilisation would have been completed in no more than one week. Russian infantry, marching from the interior of the country as mobilisation got under way, would have been available to be thrown in on the Czechoslovak front at the end of the second month of hostilities. By this time Prague might have been lost and the battle for the Rhine be in full swing. The Germans, unable to reinforce the left bank owing to Britain's and France's bombing of the Rhine bridges, with the Siegfried Line in consequence gravely threatened, would have been obliged to concentrate on the defence of the Rhenish-Westphalian industrial area, and operations against the Czechs would necessarily have slowed down. And just at this moment the Russian steam-roller would have made its ponderous progress at an infantry pace right up to the battle front by Prague, and would have started to roll forward, crushing the German forces beneath it as it went. By this time also military replacement material, munitions, replacement of aeroplane losses would have been pouring into Czechoslovakia in a steady stream from Russia. Russia would have been feeding the Slovakian munition factories with raw material; Bohemia would already, of course, have been lost by Czechoslovakia to the Germans. This would have been the decisive stage of the war, when Germany would have found something like the pincers process being applied to herself, with a threat of a French offensive across the Rhine and a Russian offensive westwards from behind Prague cutting Northern and Southern Germany in two.

CHAPTER XXXII  
KONRAD HENLEIN

WITH THE FALL OF THE AUSTRIAN BASTION, THAT OF Czechoslovakia became the front line of defence against Nazism. I returned eagerly to the "front" from London to Prague at the beginning of April, certain that I was going to find myself once more in the thick of things, covering the biggest story which the ensuing few months would bring. I knew it was going to be a sombre business. It held three possibilities. The Western Powers might in face of this enormously strong position which Hitler was now going to threaten at last find the courage to say that they would hold it, say so openly in unmistakable terms and in good time. In that case Hitler's bluff, which had carried him through the Rhineland Occupation, rearmament and the rape of Austria, would be called, there would be an end to the policy of retreat by the democracies and the yielding to bullying and bluff what could otherwise only be acquired by victory after battle, and the end of the dictatorships would be in sight. The second possibility was that the Western Powers would palaver, seek to gain time, seek to soothe the savage tiger with flatteries, cajolings and appeals to his "better nature" while deluding their own populations as usual with *couéisms* in Press and Parliament until the dictator would have so far committed himself in threats and boasts that to save himself in his own country he would have to attempt to make good his threats of war. That again held two possibilities: either he would be overthrown—as I knew had nearly taken place on February 4th, when the Reichswehr Generals had been on the verge of revolt in face of the threat to seize Austria—by a swift military coup, or war would really begin. There could in the latter case have been no doubt about the ultimate issue—the overthrow of the brutal Nazi dictatorship, faced by a combination of Britain, France, Russia and Czechoslovakia, by the sullen hostility of the German masses outside the two millions of the Nazi Party and by the strong disapproval of the Reichswehr generals, who knew Germany's pitiful weakness

in material reserves and in technical personnel for a major war. But the war, while it lasted, was going to be terrible, and the very beautiful old city which I was going to make my home was going to be blasted off the face of the earth in an utterly ruthless attempt to terrorise the civilian population by wholesale massacre into panic surrender. There was a third possibility—a repetition of the Austrian tragedy. To this—surrender of their almost impregnable country—I knew the Czechoslovaks would never agree. I knew that they would fight—if necessary with no one at their side for the first few weeks with the certainty that their treaties with France, Russia, Rumania and Yugoslavia ensured ultimate support.

Therefore surrender could only be effected by treachery within the camp of Czechoslovakia's allies. That seemed impossible. All Czechoslovakia's treaties were watertight. More than that, self-preservation would compel the signatories to stand by them. The alternative was to place such power in the hands of Germany as to render her almost irresistible when the day of reckoning finally arrived. I could not quite dismiss this possibility, as reason bade me. I could not dismiss it because everything which I had heard in London pointed to a deliberate intention of the Chamberlain Government not merely not to support Czechoslovakia—that I had never expected—but to bring her into a position where it would be impossible for her to defend herself. Reason told me that the suspected plot would fail. The French interests at stake were too vital for the French Government—even with M. Bonnet as Foreign Minister—to let Chamberlain bully it into national suicide. True, the fate of the franc lay in the hands of London, and this weapon—the threat to smash the franc—had before been used to bring France to the heel of Britain against her own interests, and might be used again. But this time British vital interests seemed too obviously to coincide with those of France for the move to be repeated. For Chamberlain himself, it was clear to me that the fear of the German dictatorship collapsing, and the hatred of any co-operation with Russia, would outweigh the obvious national interests. For him the ideological need of maintaining Fascism lest its fall might advance the cause of Socialism would give Hitler the lever whereby he could force Chamberlain to sacrifice British imperial interests, to the gain of German imperialism.



But Chamberlain, after all, was not Britain. There was an Opposition, there was public opinion, a Press which, if not really free, was at all events free from the open shackles imposed on the Press in Fascist countries. And there were the "Young Conservatives", there was the great and powerful British civil service, with its traditions of "my country right or wrong" and its highly trained brains, which would see infallibly what was at stake and insist that rather than surrender this vital bulwark, Britain must fight, even if the cost should be the fall of Adolf Hitler. And there were Mr. Chamberlain's own Cabinet colleagues. True, it was common knowledge that he pursued constantly a dictatorial line with them, and that they often found themselves confronted by the Premier with some *fait accompli* in foreign policy instead of being consulted in advance, but on such a vital issue they would certainly restrain him or resign. Nevertheless, all the confidential information from parliamentary, Foreign Office and diplomatic circles at home which reached me in Prague from time to time confirmed my impressions gained in March in London that a "Chamberlain Plot" against Czechoslovakia was in being all the time. I saw no cause to vary the reply which I gave to the Czechs from the moment I arrived when they asked—as everyone in responsible positions did ask—"What will your Government do?" My reply was always, "Nothing to help you—everything to lame your powers of self-defence. *Timeo Daneos*." And when Mr. Chamberlain sent his uninvited gift in the form of the Runciman Mission, I was still more convinced that the Czechs must beware of the Greeks. I saw Lord Runciman step from the train with his attaché case on arrival at the Wilson Station in Prague, to be welcomed not only by the representatives of the Czechoslovak Government, but with far greater cordiality by those who were already rebel leaders—the heads of the Henleinist Nazi movement. A well-read, English-speaking Czech friend standing near saw him drive off, and turned to ask me, "And what, in your opinion, will this visitor mean for us?"

"Do you know Wilde's 'Ballad of Reading Gaol'?" I asked him.

"I read it years ago," he replied, puzzled. "But what has that to do with the Runciman Mission to Czechoslovakia?"

"There is a line in it," I told him, "which runs as far as I can recollect, something like this :

" ' The hangman with his little bag came creeping through the gloom '.

"There goes Czechoslovakia's hangman."

Czechoslovakia and its problems were familiar enough to me long before I came to live in Prague. For twelve years Czechoslovakia had formed part of the territory which I had to cover from Vienna, and I had spent some weeks every year on the spot. I knew something of the Sudeten areas at first hand also, and it was just two years previously that I had spent several hours with Konrad Henlein questioning him about his movement. Never for a moment had I shared what was then the prevailing delusion in London, that Konrad Henlein was a reasonable, moderate, democratically minded young man who, if the Czechs would only give him their support, would save the Sudeten districts from Nazism. This was the impression which Konrad Henlein himself had very successfully produced in lectures at Chatham House and in conversation with British politicians and writers in London. That was just the trouble—they had seen him in London, and most of them had no first-hand knowledge of either Czechoslovakia as a whole or of the Sudeten districts. I met him in his own country, with which I was already familiar, as leader of a movement concerning the essential character of which my nearly twenty years' residence in Germany and Central Europe in close contact with German reactionary Fascist movements left no room for doubt. With unwilling admiration I felt at once what a clever choice the hard-boiled German industrialists behind the S.D.P.—Sudeten-deutsche Partei, as the Henlein movement was officially called—had made in selecting this young gymnastics teacher as its figure-head. The Czechoslovak Government, on the sound principle that those who openly proclaimed their intention of not abiding by the rules of the democratic game should not be allowed to play, had dissolved the Nazi Party as a subversive and conspiratorial movement. The Nazi leaders in the Sudeten area were labelled. It was necessary to find someone with a clean political past who could be trusted to play the Fascist game and yet maintain a democratic exterior. The democratic exterior was needed, not merely to satisfy the requirements of the Czechoslovak Government, but in order to "put up a

case" to those good souls in England whose hearts tend to bleed at the mere mention of the word "minority". That the "minority" may in reality be merely an outpost across the frontiers of a gigantic majority outnumbering many times the nominal "majority" of the smaller State, they do not always pause to reflect. Nor do they always investigate cold-bloodedly and consequentially whether this minority is really seeking the remedy of just grievances, or whether it is exploiting grievances which may exist and yet be insignificant compared with those of other, genuinely oppressed minorities, in order to pursue essentially reactionary, subversive aims. Konrad Henlein, mild-mannered, quiet, serious and gifted with a curious persuasiveness which while one talks with him makes one feel that it would be an undeserved personal insult to cast doubt on his statements which ordinary horse-sense tells one to be untrue, was admirably adapted to make the right impression in London, which was always the centre of his intrigues against the Czechoslovak Government.

The young man with whom I had lunched in 1936 in his home town of Asch had looked like just what he was—an athletic bank clerk. He had been a volunteer in the Austrian army in the World War, wounded and taken prisoner by the Italians in 1918, and after a few years in a bank, had taken up gymnastics as a profession. He had gathered a following around him from the gymnastic clubs, which always had a strong political tinge of German nationalism. And this following, together with his other characteristics, pointed to him as the right figure-head for the Sudetengerman Party, which was founded in 1933 from among the followers of the (legal) German Nationalist Party and the dissolved Nazi Party.

Konrad Henlein had handled me very well. He had told me that his Party had absolutely nothing in common with Nazism. It was democratic—because of its system of electing Party Committees. It was not anti-Semitic—he challenged me to produce any regulation in the Party forbidding Jews to join. And he did not even know Herr Hitler. It was a Party absolutely loyal to the Czechoslovak Republic, because the Sudeten industries were indissolubly bound up with the Czech hinterland, and because the Sudeten area could only be joined to Germany at the cost of a war in which this area would at once become No Man's Land and its inhabitants be practically

wiped out in the first few weeks. It all sounded pretty good, and if Konrad Henlein had come to London to tell these things to an audience of which I had formed part, I should have believed them.

As it was, I put a few questions to Herr Henlein. If he was so indifferent to Adolf Hitler, and if his Party had nothing in common with Nazism, why was it that the Party Press day out, day in preached the glories of Hitler and lauded the aims and triumphs of German Nazism? If the Party was democratic, why was its Press filled with sneers at democracy? And why did Herr Henlein himself, the head of the Party, refuse, precisely as Adolf Hitler had done himself, to stand for Parliament? If the Party did not even envisage the annexation of the Sudeten territory by Germany, why did the German radio propaganda, which openly pursued this aim, give such unwavering support to this movement in all its broadcasts? And was not the object of Henlein's own propaganda in London the creation of a state of mind in England which would one day induce the rulers of that country to help Germany acquire the Sudeten areas without the war which certainly would have devastated them? And did he not envisage the possibility, after Czechoslovakia's independence had been destroyed, of maintaining the industrial ties through a German-Czech customs union? And how many Jews in the Sudeten areas had he on his Party membership roll? And how came so many columns of anti-Semitic propaganda into his Party organs? I produced quite a formidable batch of cuttings from his own papers, ready prepared, in support of my questions.

Konrad Henlein is better at saying his piece than in answering questions. In his replies he did little more than say his piece all over again in other words. But I remember that he gave as a reason for not being in Parliament the fact that he could not speak Czech. And when I forced him to admit that the same was true of practically all his followers who were in Parliament, he made me distinctly aware of his reluctant feeling that I was somehow lacking in that gentility and good breeding which he had previously felt to be part of every Englishman's make-up. I remember his saying with winning ingenuousness, "But of course, I am studying Czech, as a loyal citizen of this Republic", and I was sufficiently abashed by his obvious pain over my ill-mannered questions not to remark

that this should not be too difficult for a man—although he preached the German racial doctrines—whose mother's name had been Hedwica Dvořackova. But I did press him on the question of the number of Sudeten Jews who had joined his Party, and he admitted that he did not know of any, but "he thought" there might be "one or two Jews" in Prague among his followers.

Then we shook hands, and Konrad Henlein unwisely handed me over to one of his lieutenants to do the round of the distressed areas regularly shown to foreign visitors as a proof, not that the Sudeten districts were not immune from the world economic crisis, but that the Czechs were oppressors of the Germans. Unfortunately this lieutenant was a Viennese journalist named Fiala from the suppressed Nazi organ, the *Dötz*, who knew my name but not my political views, and who proceeded to spill the Party beans with the utmost liberality, starting with the complaint that I was the thirtieth foreigner he had had to take on "this blasted round" within six weeks, and that he wished the Party would find him something more interesting to do. Then we motored along the frontier, and he introduced me to a series of the toughest Nazi leaders and embryo concentration-camp commandants whom it has ever been my ill luck to shake by the hand. Talking to me rather as one of the elect than as a stranger to be impressed, they abundantly confirmed all the opinions I had formed about the real character of the movement—that it was nothing but an outpost of the Third Reich within Czechoslovakia. There was no more honeyed talk of loyalty to the Republic, co-operation with the Czechs, democracy or indifference towards the Jews. Instead, there was naked Nazism, savage racial hatred of Czechs and Jews, adoration of Adolf Hitler and an unconcealed determination to bring the whole area under the rule of German Nazi dictatorship.

Thus it was without the faintest illusion that I arrived in Prague in April 1938, a few weeks before Henlein himself threw off the mask which he had worn only so long as it was necessary to secure freedom of movement within the democratic Republic and to seek for the support of Britain on the assumption that it was still a democratic country. The annexation of Austria, with its envelopment of Czechoslovakia, had stampeded the leaders of the German Activist Parties, the Catholics and Agrarians, who formed part of the Coalition Government of

Czechoslovakia, into leaving it and merging themselves in the Henlein Party, under the threat that all found outside its ranks had nothing but the concentration camp and worse to expect as "race traitors" when the Henlein triumph came. In his speech after Schuschnigg's visit to Berchtesgaden, Hitler had declared his intention of "liberating" 10,000,000 "oppressed" German subjects of neighbouring States, and everyone knew that this meant that he had determined sooner or later to treat Czechoslovakia—at least the Sudeten areas—as he had treated Austria. Terrorism of individuals, particularly of the workers, by the Henleinist employers, had gone to unheard-of lengths, and in the smallest hamlets throughout the country the Henleinists were threatening death or lifelong imprisonment to all who failed to take an eleventh-hour opportunity of coming into line. The stampede of the Activist Parties, if not creditable, was certainly understandable. Only twelve months before, they had come to an agreement with the Czech Parties which was steadily improving the economic position of the whole German minority, despite a certain amount of sabotage of its provisions by local Czech officials in various areas. Even before this agreement, the German minority of Czechoslovakia had been easily the most privileged in the whole of Europe. At no time politically persecuted, always arrogantly conscious of the backing of Germany's sixty-six millions, its real grounds of complaint were limited to certain economic disabilities—which were in part politically necessary because of German disloyalty to the Republic—and to petty officiousness practised by some of the local Czech officials. Never had there been the least comparison between their grievances and the real sufferings of the shamefully persecuted German and Slovene minorities under the yoke of Italian Fascism, of the discontented German minority in Poland and of the Polish minority in Germany. Their minor grievances had been continually exaggerated, inflated and trumpeted abroad by the German propaganda machine because they were an instrument to forward the German plans for hegemony in Eastern Europe. The stampede of the Activist Parties into the Henleinist ranks was demonstrably due not to conviction but to sheer terrorism; it was this terrorism, not unity of feeling, which subsequently gave Henlein his big vote at the municipal elections in May 1938. In this there was nothing remarkable; what was remarkable was



the steadfast courage of the hundreds of thousands, mainly workers, who withstood the terror and who maintained at the polls, and to the very last, their loyalty to the German Social-Democratic Party and to the Communist Party, both of which stood by the democratic Republic. To-day, this loyalty is being rewarded in the concentration camps of the Third Reich.

On Sunday, April 24th, 1938, Henlein came into the open with his Karlsbad programme. It was set forth in the speech made to the Party Congress in Karlsbad Kurhaus, and in every line of it could be heard, not so much Herr Henlein himself as his master's voice. Except for the fact that the Henlein Party banners had by law to take the place of the illegal Swastika banners for which they stood, the meeting was identical with any Nazi Party congress in Germany. The audience was worked up to frenzy by the usual tribal choruses of "Sieg Heil!" and other slogans. The foreign Press, except the Reichsgerman Press and the Czechoslovak Press, were excluded. There was the Nazi salute, with the word "Heil" spoken and the word "Hitler" understood. Henlein rejected the Government's offer, made on March 28th, to provide a charter of liberties for all the national minorities. He rejected it out of hand and without examination. He spoke for the first time with open arrogance, not as leader of a minority demanding concessions, but as one of the nation of 75,000,000 Germans who felt themselves well able to dictate to a nation of 9,000,000 Czechs. Dropping for ever the democratic pretence, he proclaimed his as a purely Nazi movement. He attacked the Czechs and the Czechoslovak Republic in unmeasured terms, made no appeals or suggestions for negotiation, but declared, "We shall no longer tolerate a situation which for us means war in time of peace". He told the Czechs that they would have to abandon the idea that it was their task to act as a bastion against German expansion to the East. He proclaimed to the State in which he represented only a part of a minority that it would have completely to change its foreign policy, to abandon its alliances and to become an instrument of German policy. Then he announced the Karlsbad Programme of eight points. These were :

- (1) Full equality for the Sudeten Germans with the Czech race.
- (2) Recognition of the "Deutsche Volksgruppe" in Czechoslovakia as a "legal personality".



- (3) Fixing of the boundaries " of the territory settled by Germans ".
- (4) Autonomous German administration of this area.
- (5) Legal enactments for the protection of special rights for all Germans living outside this area.
- (6) " Reparation " for all " injustices done to Sudeten Germans since 1918 ".
- (7) Only Germans to be State employees in the German districts.
- (8) Full liberty " to demonstrate Germanism " and adhesion to Nazi ideology.

The announcement of these demands was greeted with fanatic Nazi enthusiasm. To me it was perfectly clear that Konrad Henlein had at Karlsbad raised the standard of revolt and that there could be only one issue: the Czechoslovak Government must reject the demands and put down the revolt, or it would lose all authority, and with it the Sudeten territories.

If you think this sounds a sweeping judgment, just analyse with me for a moment what these demands meant. Konrad Henlein demanded the right to run the Sudeten areas " in accordance with the ideology of the German people ". This meant the establishment of Nazi totalitarian rule within the democratic Republic. It meant that what was virtuous in other parts of the Republic would be criminal in the Sudeten districts. It meant the establishment of concentration camps for those who preached the doctrines of free speech and liberty, and the rewarding of those who urged its overthrow. It meant that the Czechoslovak subjects in the Sudeten territory would acknowledge Adolf Hitler as their leader and God, while those in the rest of the Republic's territory looked upon Edouard Beneš as the elected head of the State. It meant that here Czechoslovaks of Jewish race would be insulted, beaten, imprisoned and prevented from earning a living purely by virtue of their race, whereas elsewhere throughout the Republic they would enjoy the same treatment as their fellow-citizens of other races. The demand that only Germans should be State employees in these districts, coupled with that for autonomy, meant handing over all control to those whose hostility to the State was undisguised; it would have resulted in absolutely unrestrained Nazi terrorism, under which Herr Henlein could have " voted " these districts out of the State at any moment it suited him. Still more fantastic was the demand for recognition of the " German folk group " as a " legal personality ". This meant that Germans living outside the Sudeten area—perhaps in the little German-language island formed by the

*Zipser-Deutschen* in the heart of Slovakia—could have claimed not to be subject to the laws of Slovakia, but to the decrees issued by Konrad Henlein far away in Asch. The whole thing was impossible of realisation, and was clearly meant to be so. It was inevitable that the Government should reply, as it promptly did through the Foreign Minister, Dr. Kamil Krofta, on May 6th, that Czechoslovakia rejected Henlein's demands while making "every concession except such as would minimise our sovereignty and endanger the security of the State and its present frontiers".

The Government in Prague had on the face of it every reason to believe that this attitude would have the support of its friends and allies. Mr. Chamberlain had said on March 24th that it was evident that a Central European war might well involve Great Britain. This happened less than a fortnight after Germany had invaded Austria, while Lord Halifax had paced up and down his room in the Foreign Office saying, "Horrible! horrible! I never thought they would do it". (The British Foreign Minister spoke in the room where on the night of August 4th, 1914, one of his predecessors, Sir Edward Grey, had watched the lamps being extinguished in the street below and said, "The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime".) Mr. Hore-Belisha, asked by a Press photographer to smile as he left No. 10 Downing Street, had answered shortly, "Why should I smile?" Everywhere there were signs that non-Fascist Europe was at last prepared to face up to the Nazi threat—at the eleventh hour.

M. Kalinin had told Czechoslovak trades unionists visiting Moscow that if Czechoslovakia were attacked the Soviet would fulfil to the letter all its engagements towards Czechoslovakia and France. Most important of all, Daladier and Bonnet had come to London, and Daladier had told Chamberlain emphatically that if there were a German invasion of Czechoslovakia, France would honour her obligations to go to Czechoslovakia's assistance. True, Mr. Chamberlain had declined himself to go beyond the statement that an attack on Czechoslovakia might produce a general conflagration in which Britain would be forced to take part, but the Czechs remembered Britain's unwillingness to pronounce herself up to the last moment in 1914. They felt that, seeing how vital were British

interests in the maintenance of a strong and independent Czechoslovakia, they could be satisfied. The fact that the cat released from the bag by Konrad Henlein in Karlsbad fluttered the diplomatic doves of Europe was satisfactory to the Czechs. They themselves had always known that the animal was in the bag, and were not ill pleased that the Western democratic pigeons should at last be forced to recognise it.

On the Czech man in the street the speech produced stubborn resentment which hardened the resolution not to be deprived of the liberty regained after four hundred years' subjection to foreign rule. The Czech in the street heard himself addressed in the voice of a race considering itself born to command, spoken to a race it chose to consider born to obey. The Czechs had not heard this tone for twenty years. They recognised it again. They did not like it.

Arthur Henderson came out to Prague and told the Czechs not to compromise on democratic principles, and that in this they would have the full sympathy and support of the British people. The Czechs liked this confirmation of the line they were anyway prepared to take.

They did not know of the remarks made by another Englishman, in a position to speak with more authority, at a luncheon-party given by Viscountess Astor on May 10th, for the edification of a dozen American journalists. Here Mr. Chamberlain had told them of his plans to bring Britain and France into a Four-Power Pact with the Fascist Powers from which Russia was to be excluded. And he told these flabbergasted Americans that he was in favour of the break-up of the Czechoslovak Republic and the annexation of the Sudeten districts by Germany. He did not, of course, tell you these things in the House of Commons, and when that persistent questioner on awkward subjects, Geoffrey Le Mesurier Mander, M.P., threw some light on the matter in the House the Prime Minister persisted in giving the most evasive answers.

As the result of this "Cliveden Set" luncheon party, a number of very interesting cables were dispatched to certain American and Canadian newspapers. On Saturday May 14th, the *New York Times* published from its outside contributor "Augur" an article in which the following passage occurs :

"The question may well be asked whether Mr. Chamberlain attaches importance to a settlement of the German problem in Czechoslovakia

and what his idea may be. . . . Mr. Chamberlain to-day . . . certainly favours a more drastic measure—namely, separation of the German districts from the body of the Czechoslovak Republic and the annexation of them to Germany.”

On the same day Mr. Joseph Driscoll wrote to the *Montreal Daily Star* a similarly inspired article in which the following passages are to be found :

“ This correspondent is now privileged to shed what can truly be called official light on the real British attitude towards Czechoslovakia. . . . The accuracy of what follows cannot be disputed, and the fact that it can be released for publication in the form of background information is a testimonial to the growing desire over here for Anglo-American understanding and co-operation in world affairs.

“ Perhaps the most dangerous spot in the world is Czechoslovakia. . . . What do the British in authority think about it? These British think that there is little danger of immediate war in Europe. . . . Nothing seems clearer than that the British do not expect to fight for Czechoslovakia. . . . That being so, then the Czechs must accede to the German demands, if reasonable. . . . *Der Führer* has called for the incorporation of all Germans within the greater German Reich, but this policy, if carried to an extreme, might take in not only the Sudetendeutsche, but also German-speaking peoples of all Europe and across the Atlantic as well. . . . Frontier revision might be advisable. This would entail moving the frontier back for some miles to divorce this outer fringe from Prague and marry it to Berlin. A smaller but sounder Czechoslovakia would be the result. . . . Hitler wants all the Germans he can lay his hands on, but positively no foreigners. Czechoslovakia cannot survive in its present form, the British are convinced. . . . The Czechs should be practical and make the best terms with Hitler without any war at all.”

“ Augur ” was for many years diplomatic correspondent of the *London Times*. Joseph Driscoll is not only a prominent Canadian journalist, but one who strongly supports the policy of Mr. Chamberlain. It is beyond doubt that these two gave a correct interpretation of the views which Mr. Chamberlain put before the journalists at Lady Astor’s luncheon party.

On June 20th, 1938, Geoffrey Mander, on the motion to adjourn, said in the House :

“ I rise to call attention to certain authoritative statements that have recently appeared in the American and Canadian Press.” Mr. Mander quoted from the article by Mr. Driscoll describing it as an “ authoritative interview”. He said : “ I cannot believe that it will be suggested by the Prime Minister that any experienced resident journalist would dare to use language of that kind unless he had high authority. I do not for a moment believe that the Prime Minister will take refuge in throwing it upon the Press and saying that he cannot be

responsible for what the Press says. He knows very well that that is not the case in this instance. In view of the clearly authoritative nature of this interview"—(Hon. Members: "With whom?" "What interview?")—"I do not think the Prime Minister will dispute it, as he well knows the circumstances of it—I ask him to say why this disclosure was made to the American Press and not to this House."

The Prime Minister replied that Mr. Mander seemed to have had very little experience of the manners and methods of journalists. He said that in the *Montreal Star* article "no statement is made about an interview although the author does purport to have obtained information which he describes as official. The Hon. Member, as he does not know who is the person who provided the information to the journalist"—(Mr. Mander: "I do know")—"has no right to assume that that person is in a position to give the information to this House."

Mr. Mander: "It seems to me that the Prime Minister is trying to evade the issue."

The Prime Minister: "I do not feel called upon to confirm or deny anything that appeared in a newspaper without any authority." The Prime Minister accused Mr. Mander of being actuated by "restless and mischievous curiosity." "The Hon. Member is trying to fish around and get some information out of which he can extract some mischief, and in my opinion it is not desirable that these matters should be discussed on a fishing enquiry of that kind."

Mr. Mander: "May I ask the Prime Minister this further question? Did he see this journalist himself?"

The Prime Minister: "I am not going to satisfy the curiosity of the Hon. Member. I am not going to attempt to deny or to affirm anything in connection with a statement in this paper or a statement in any other paper at this time or any other time on matters of this or any other kind. That is my final word, and I do not think that there is anything more to be said."

It was not, however, the final word of the Opposition. For next day Sir Archibald Sinclair returned to the charge. He referred to Mr. Mander's requests for information concerning the *Montreal Daily Star* "in a speech of studious moderation and restraint." Said Sir Archibald: "The Prime Minister chose to make an unprovoked and I venture to say undignified attack on my hon. Friend. It has often seemed to me that one of the

Prime Minister's weaknesses in handling foreign affairs is that he does not seem able to foresee the effect of his words and actions. Challenged by my hon. Friend last night, the Prime Minister did not deny that he had given the interview: and let me say to him quite frankly that the story which is in circulation—and if it is untrue the sooner it is denied the better—is that this interview was given by him on or about May 10th, to twelve or fourteen American and Canadian journalists." Quoting the passage from Mr. Driscoll's article which I have cited above, including the sentence that "the Czechs must accede to the German demands if reasonable," Sir Archibald said that: "From the point of view of peace no more dangerous statement of British policy could go out than that. I have been enormously impressed by the determination of France to fulfil her obligations to Czechoslovakia. The French are convinced that nothing but the firmness shown then" [at the time of the Czechoslovak mobilisation on May 21st] "did save peace. It was saved first by the wise policy of democratic Czechoslovakia; it was saved secondly by the firmness of France; and the Prime Minister certainly played his part. The Prime Minister had thrown the sword of Britain into the balance of power, and any retreat from the position such as is indicated in this article would imperil the foundations of peace. When my hon. Friend asked the Prime Minister last night whether this interview was given by him, the Prime Minister did not deny it. The Prime Minister is here. Let him answer for himself."

The Prime Minister: "I must protest against any assumption that because I do not deny that I gave the interview, that therefore I am admitting it. . . . I say that I will not either admit or deny the truth of the stories."

Sir Archibald Sinclair: "The article goes on to say, 'This brings up the question of a Four-Power Pact, but the British prefer to label it something else'—I have no doubt they do—'because a Four-Power Pact might signify to some a dictators' committee to dictate to the rest of Europe. Britain would like to swing Germany and Italy into a working agreement with Britain and France to keep the peace of Europe. Soviet Russia is excluded.'

"That I consider to be a very grave statement of policy. I have constantly protested against the cold and hostile references which the Prime Minister makes to Russia. We ought to en-

courage Russia to take her share in the maintenance of international order and peace. I am sorry that the Prime Minister does not deny that he has made this statement. The information which reaches me is so specific that unless he does deny it, I must really assume that he did say it."

Mr. Mander: "Would it be in order to put this point to the Prime Minister—whether it is not a fact that this interview took place on May 10th, at a luncheon given for the purpose by Viscountess Astor"?

Viscountess Astor: "I would like to say that there is not a word of truth in it."

Sir Archibald Sinclair: "A policy such as outlined in this interview would in my opinion be dangerous to peace, to freedom and democracy, and fatal to any hope of national unity in these critical times. If it has been adopted as the policy of His Majesty's Government, Parliament and the country ought to be told. I believe that the peace of the world cannot be established on the basis of a policy of this kind. I believe that it will be disastrous to try to exclude Russia from Europe."

On June 27th, Viscountess Astor found it necessary to make a personal explanation to the House, in which she said that she had intervened to deny that the Prime Minister had given an interview in her house to Mr. Driscoll. She said: "I never had any intention of denying that the Prime Minister had attended a luncheon in my house. The Prime Minister did so attend, the object being to enable some American journalists who had not previously met him to do so privately and informally. What I did deny, and still deny, is the suggestion that what took place was an interview. An interview is a meeting arranged with a view of communication of information intended specifically to be made the subject of articles in the press."

So there at last we have it. I have only quoted a fraction of the long debates from Hansard which were necessary to establish—although still without it being possible to extract admission or denial from Mr. Chamberlain himself—that the Prime Minister did after all meet, at Lady Astor's, American journalists privately and informally, and that as the result of this meeting the journalists subsequently wrote articles in which Mr. Chamberlain's policy was interpreted as being at that time—on May 10th—that there should be no attempt to "stand by Czecho", but that Czechoslovakia should be forced to yield to Germany's demands,



be abandoned and dismembered. But naturally the Czechoslovaks were not initiated into the secrets of Cliveden House politics and Mr. Chamberlain's intention to pay Herr Hitler Danegeld in Czech currency, any more than the British public has yet been informed what kind of deal with the dictatorships Mr. Chamberlain is proposing to make or has already made concerning the British colonies. It is, however, clear that Hitler has told him details of Germany's demands to recover all her lost colonies, and that he expects to get them without being obliged to go to war.

On May 14th Henlein, after obtaining his instructions in Berlin, was back in London at his old games with the red herring. The Karlsbad programme had aroused too sharp an echo, and it was necessary to throw the democrats off the Nazi trail again. Instead of seeing his friends this time, Henlein concentrated on such opponents as Winston Churchill, and told them the same kind of things that he had told me and many others in private conversations. Henlein's line was always that of the confidence man. "Not for publication" he was a democrat, a man of moderation and a loyal subject of the State. Not one month before he fled the country to raise openly from the security of Germany the standard of revolt for the Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia, not six weeks before he declared on the German radio that his political opponents deserved no mercy and would get none, for "we shall imprison them until they turn black", a member of Lord Runciman's staff was trying to convince me that "Konrad Henlein is really a most moderate man". And so, very definitely not for publication, he told Winston Churchill on May 14th that the Karlsbad programme was more or less of a bargaining counter, and that he had no intention of insisting on an absolute fulfilment which he could not expect. I doubt if he cut much ice with Winston.

Exactly a fortnight before, I had heard Konrad Henlein "for publication". I had no doubt which version to believe. On a public platform at Reichenberg I had stood facing 43,000 disciplined yet fanaticised men and women, tense with waiting the deliberately delayed thrill of Konrad Henlein's arrival. The songs they sang and the slogans they roared at the prompting of the trained chorus—from my point of vantage I could pick out the latter very clearly in the right-hand front corner

of the gathering—were all familiar to me from Vienna, the new and brutalised Vienna which I had just left behind. “To-day Germany belongs to us, to-morrow we shall rule the world” they sang. Instead of brown shirts and jackboots there were white shirts and jackboots; instead of the Swastika banner the scarlet Henlein banner with the white shield in the centre and the monogram “S.D.P.”. As the loudspeakers announced “*Der Führer kommt*” the roaring of the open exhausts of twenty motor-cycles of Konrad Henlein’s motorised bodyguard heralded the arrival of the Führer, Czechoslovak edition.

The tall, thick-set man of forty who strode down the field while every right hand shot out in the Hitler salute and every throat roared “Heil” was not quite the athlete that I remembered from two years before. Something with Göringesque forebodings had happened to his figure meantime. In his dark-grey uniform and Prussian jackboots, with shoulders squared, head thrown back and outstretched right arm, he was playing the rôle of leader well. He knew his “book” and had learned his drill. But the effort to produce the authentic dictatorial glare through gold-rimmed spectacles had something of mechanical perfection.

But there was nothing mechanical in the great roar which greeted him from 43,000 Germans in search of a Leader. Here was the true fanaticism, the herd instinct, the ecstatic surrender of individual judgment to the absolute will of one man which is common to every Hitlerite gathering. Now this mass abnegation was to be rewarded, as the Leader stood in fiery oratory to raise the little careworn Herr Schmidt from the grocer’s shop, the unemployed post-office clerk Herr Mayer to a level with the Leader, to that comradeship of superiority to all the lesser breeds without the law in which the dupe of Fascism finds consolation for his surrender of personal liberty and personal dignity.

For full five minutes this once-athletic ex-bank clerk stood in the pose of Napoleon, waiting for the frenzied applause to die in the fraction of a second at a given signal. As I watched him I felt that here might be a reliable chief of staff, an obedient disciple, but that Henlein was neither Commander-in-Chief nor Messiah. Mussolini, in the intoxication of moving his great audiences, gets completely carried away, really lives his rôle, like any other great actor facing the footlights with a big part.

Hitler lashes himself into fanatical frenzy, which is often followed in private by complete collapse. Neither of these things, I felt sure, had ever happened to the meticulous and diligent Konrad Henlein. The frenzy aroused by his appearance was for the message, not for the man. The message was good enough—"To-day Germany, to-morrow the world! I will bring you to the standards of the God-given chieftain who is leading the Teutonic tribes towards domination of the world! Follow me and you shall share in their spoils!" They followed him, and are already sharing in the deprivations of the one-pot Sunday.

Henlein did a good job throughout nearly five years, playing the assiduous ape to his master. When Hitler spoke in 1936 in a Munich beerhouse on the New German Culture, Henlein on the same day told the Germans of Prague how German culture was going to capture that city. When the Nazis struck in Danzig and Herr Greiser cocked his famous snook at the League of Nations and Mussolini betrayed Schuschnigg into concluding the disastrous July 1936 agreement with Germany, Henlein declared in Eger, "We would rather be hated with Germany than derive any benefit through exclusion from that hate". Simultaneously with Dr. Goebbels launching the "nest-of-Bolshevism" campaign against Czechoslovakia and the "Russian-troops-and-airplanes-in-Prague" lie in all those newspapers which from Berlin to Bucharest and from Leipzig to London respond to the touch of his fingers on the central keyboard, Konrad Henlein started his Party's crusade against "Marxism". When the Nazis in Germany opened the "True German" and "Degenerate Art" parallel exhibitions in Munich in 1937, the Henleinist Nazis started a "racially pure" art exhibition in Karlsbad, and in Aussig slashed with knives the modern pictures displayed in an exhibition where the artist's performance and not his grandmother was the key to admission. When Adolf Hitler made his great appeal to "the women of Germany" and told them the rôle which Nazism had devised for them, Henlein addressed the Sudetengerman women at Neudeck on similar lines. When Hitler and Mussolini proclaimed their countries as the pillars of the Anti-Communist International on the Maifeld in Berlin, Henlein in Franzensbad declared that the Sudetengermans were a third pillar of anti-Communism. And just as Hitler diverted from big business in

the Ruhr which financed him the rising wrath of the distressed workers of Germany and turned it against the Jews, so did Herr Henlein perform the same legerdemain for his financial backers among the Sudeten industrialists. If not a brilliant, Konrad Henlein proved always a reliable second in the duelling-field. Whether his reward will be commensurate with his services time will show. Personally I am inclined to prophesy quite an early relegation into obscurity of German Führer Number Two. As an ultimate successor I should be inclined to back the hard-bitten K. H. Frank, who looks the born commander of a concentration camp, or the fiery, good-looking and fanatical Dr. Sebekowsky. Sebekowsky spoke on that day at Reichenberg on Henlein's platform. "Let the representatives of Prague who are here to-day", he shouted at the embarrassed Czechoslovak high police officers, who in accordance with law were taking notes on the platform, "report to Prague the spirit of our meeting and the demands we make". And these demands as put forward by Henlein (quite contrary to his private statements in London) were for the fulfilment of the very letter of the Karlsbad programme as an absolute minimum.

Even in Reichenberg there was evidence enough of the untruth of the allegation that Konrad Henlein had the whole population of the Sudeten area behind him. For I watched that same morning a demonstration of 15,000—German democrats of all shades, Communists and Czech residents belonging to every party from Right to Left—marching out to a counter-demonstration. And then, after a hard drive through some of the loveliest sub-alpine scenery in Central Europe, I got to Karlsbad the same evening in time to see the end of a most impressive demonstration of courage and fidelity by the German Social-Democrats. To the number of 20,000, every one of them by that fact marked men and women, they had assembled in a market square to listen to the leader of the Party, Wenzel Jaksch, who, despite delicate health, had tirelessly rallied them for years to the cause of German liberty, decency and real independence. These people knew that true liberty was to be found, not within the Germany of the guillotine, the mediæval executioner with his blood-stained axe and the concentration camp, but in the democratic Republic of Czechoslovakia, where, if the German had a grievance, as he often had, he could voice it openly against the Czechs without fear of punishment. A

couple of months later I stood by the frontier post at Zinnwald looking into Germany and talked to a Henleinist mechanic who kept greeting his friends with the Hitler salute. "Of course we are all for Henlein in Zinnwald," he said, "but I hope it will not mean actually the Anschluss. I have often been at work on the other side, and over there, if you open your mouth about anything you don't like, you just disappear, and one day people learn that you are in a concentration camp. But that they don't believe over here unless they have worked in Germany. I am only afraid they may find it out one day when it is too late."

"Our workers", said Wenzel Jaksch that evening, addressing himself to the Czech Government, "need work and bread to defend democracy as a soldier needs ammunition. Help us to bombard the Henlein position with bread." It was a primitive expression of the fact that the Henlein Party had managed to canalise the discontent of the unemployed middle classes and the underpaid clerks into Nationalist channels and use it against the Czechs. The Czechs did not heed as much as if they had been wiser they would have done these appeals of the German Social-Democratic leader.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### “ MÉCHANT ANIMAL ”

**D**URING THE MONTH OF MAY THE CAMPAIGN TO WEAR DOWN the nerves of the Czech Government became intense. In the Sudeten areas the Henleinists began to instigate a series of incidents of increasing gravity, plainly intended to culminate in something which Hitler would use as an excuse for invasion. Across the frontier Germany began massing troops and moving them forward. And London began its campaign of diplomatic bullying which was to culminate in the dictated terms of Berchtesgaden and Munich. This was the hardest thing of all to face. *Démarche* after *démarche* occurred in Prague, and in London Jan Masaryk found himself treated on more than one occasion like a troublesome schoolboy. At first pressure on Czechoslovakia to yield ground to the Henleinists was coupled with a non-binding suggestion that if the Czechs behaved like good children and gave up successively what London—with Paris trailing along behind—demanded of them, they could expect support in the last resort if their good will failed to bring them peace and security within their own frontiers. Later, however, the tone adopted was one which aroused the most intense bitterness among the Czechs.

“ The Chamberlain Government ”, officials of the Czechoslovak Foreign Office told me on more than one occasion, “ is treating the head of our State as though he were a nigger chieftain ruling some troublesome colonial tribe. Both the matter and the manner of the Anglo-French *démarches*, in which, of course, we know Britain takes the lead, are becoming more and more intolerable. Latterly there has barely been an attempt to maintain even the appearance of normal diplomatic courtesy. The most ridiculous complaints are made about any subject which it is thought worth while to raise, in the hope of wearing down our nerves. We are told that our tanks ‘ have an unpleasant expression ’, whatever that may mean, as though tanks were expected to charm by their gentle manner. Not

only are we threatened again and again that if we do not make fresh concessions to rebels against State authority, we shall be deserted by our allies—we are even told that in certain events those whom we had every reason to expect to be our friends will actually come in against us. Worst of all, constant pressure is applied to secure that we do not allow our police to defend themselves and maintain order with a firm hand. When President Beneš and Dr. Krofta come to write the truth concerning diplomatic contacts between London and Prague during 1938, the world will find it hard to believe that such ‘ scenes ’ were possible as have actually taken place.”

The “ crisis about Prague ” seemed every other day to approach a climax. Through it all, Prague itself remained the calmest capital in Europe. However much London might put on the screw, the “ Maginot Line ” stood fast, the army was ready down to the last man, France was bound very definitely by two treaties and Russia by another. French statesmen had publicly confirmed several times their obligations to defend Czechoslovakia, and the Little Entente their own to defend her against any attack from Hungary. There were, indeed, deep suspicions that Mr. Chamberlain was endeavouring to force on Czechoslovakia such sacrifices as would render this country ultimately unable to defend herself. When Czechoslovakia suggested that certain concessions demanded would be not only dangerous to her security, but would violate the Constitution, she was told to stretch the Constitution. Czechoslovakia dug in her toes and determined that nothing should be done, whatever the pressure, which would weaken her ability to resist invasion. There was not overmuch trust in M. Bonnet, but both honour and self-interest tied France to the rigid fulfilment of her obligations. About Russia there had never been a moment’s doubt, and the most satisfactory assurances were readily forthcoming. Czechoslovakia would defend herself, and self-interest would force Britain to back French fulfilment of her treaties.

On May 9th Konrad Henlein disappeared, on the eve of an official invitation already conveyed unofficially to meet the Premier, Dr. Hodza, and discuss the drafting of a new minority statute. It was learned that Henlein once again had gone to Germany. This flight across the frontier was the more remarkable in that it occurred on the eve of the communal elections, which were to be held in three batches throughout Czechoslovakia.



At the same moment the German radio campaign of slanders went beyond all previous bounds in its abusive allegations of "attacks" on the Sudeten Nazis by the Czechs. Then came the definite news that German divisions concentrated on Chemnitz were moving in battle formation towards the Czechoslovak frontier. The British Intelligence Service confirmed to Prague from Munich sources the reports of the Czechoslovak Secret Service. The moment seemed to be at hand.

On the afternoon of Friday, May 20th, President Beneš summoned at the Hradshin a conference of the Supreme Defence Council and of the Cabinet. Immediate mobilisation was decided on. The military demanded the calling up of five-year classes of reservists. Meantime the British Government (although, as we know, Mr. Chamberlain was secretly decided on the sacrifice of Czechoslovakia) became alarmed at the idea that Germany would act so precipitately that Czechoslovakia would have the chance of defending herself, that France and Russia would support her and that Britain after all would have to defend the Czechoslovak bastion—and at that in conjunction with Soviet Russia—and thus in the end bring about the fall of Hitler. In Berlin Sir Neville Henderson was told on Friday afternoon to make urgent inquiries as to the meaning of the German troop movements. He was told that there was "nothing in them" and the reply was passed on to Prague, just in time to reach the Cabinet and Defence Council sittings. It was heard with relief. In view of it, it was decided that there was no need to mobilise five-year classes. Instead, one-year class and the whole of the most important reservists, the "specialist" technical troops, were mobilised. Within five hours, 400,000 Czechoslovak troops, with the full complement of tanks, armoured cars and heavy artillery, were manning the frontier defences.

A sigh of relief went up from the whole nation. The men were at their posts, and surprise had been ruled out. After the Czechs had shown that they were going to defend themselves, British diplomatic pressure was exerted in a favourable sense in Berlin, where warnings were given that invasion might precipitate a general war in which Britain might unwillingly find herself dragged in on the side of France, Russia and Czechoslovakia. Faced by exactly the same situation as had confronted Austria two months before, Czechoslovakia had taken precisely

the opposite action. The results justified her up to the hilt. There was no German invasion. Herr Hitler has since loudly asseverated that the reports of the German preparations were “ infamous lies ”. The Czechoslovak Secret Service and the British Secret Service know better, but they keep their secrets to themselves. Anyone who believes that Sir Neville Henderson was instructed to take the step he did on the basis of a “ lie ” is welcome to the belief. Whitehall knew the facts and, partly owing, as I have written before, to the temporary absence of certain defeatist and Germanophile elements, took strong action. There can be no doubt that Germany intended one of two things—either to frighten Britain with a war-scare, and thus produce renewed pressure on Czechoslovakia to yield at once, or to make a lightning dash into an unprepared Czechoslovakia, rush to the “ language frontier ” and declare the Sudeten lands annexed. Personally what I have learned in Prague makes me inclined to favour the latter hypothesis. But of one thing I am quite certain: that Germany neither desired nor intended to risk a general European conflict. And of another thing I can speak with positive personal knowledge: that Czechoslovakia took the step she did in full consciousness of its extreme gravity, and in the determination to fight to the last man for liberty and independence. Probably by her promptitude and the proofs of absolute military efficiency which her lightning mobilisation gave to the world, she saved the peace of Europe on May 21st. Having thus incidentally restored complete order in the Sudeten areas and secured the complete cessation of Henleinist disorders on the appearance of the first troops, the Government was favoured by a visit from the Henleinist deputies Frank and Neuwirth, who haughtily demanded demobilisation and the use of the Sudeten Party Storm-troopers “ to restore order ”. They were politely bowed out of the Ministry of the Interior, and the first batch of municipal elections of Sunday, May 22nd, were held without the disorders which it had been planned by the Henleinists should mark them.

And in Tabor, near his home, Edouard Beneš, to whose personal energy above all the decision to mobilise was due, told his own people that war could still be avoided through a determination to let nothing destroy Czechoslovakia’s democracy. “ We are living ”, he said, “ through the gravest moments since the end of the War. In the days that are coming to us we must

banish fears and stand prepared for everything. Nothing—absolutely nothing—will be able to shatter our democratic system.” But President Beneš was reckoning only with his country’s enemies. He failed to reckon with its friends.

In Berlin a special train was ordered by the British Embassy for the removal of all British subjects on May 22nd, and many foreigners left the country precipitately. In Munich Hitler called a council of Reichswehr generals—which included General Keitel and General von Brauschitsch. So unsatisfactory—in fact, so threatening—were the replies received by Sir Neville Henderson from Von Ribbentrop that on May 22nd he was twice sent back by Downing Street to obtain some improvement on the first answer given him that day. The *Völkischer Beobachter* delivered a furious onslaught on Britain. There was no war, but it was quite clear that Germany was going to force Britain to hand her over the proceeds of war without battle as a reward for her momentary abstention.

Henlein came back from Germany in chastened mood and condescended to have his one and only conference with Premier Dr. Hodza throughout the whole period of the Government’s efforts to appease the Sudeten Germans. This was on May 23rd. The interview lasted only three hours, but the fact that it took place at all was proof of the salutary effect of Czechoslovakia’s mobilisation. On May 21st Czechoslovak unity reached its zenith. The ogling of Konrad Henlein by Right-Wing Agrarians (prominent amongst them the then Minister of the Interior, Dr. Czerny, and the Chairman of the Party, M. Beran), which had often hampered unity of action by the Government Coalition, entirely ceased, and was not renewed until just before the final disaster in September. The outside world, which, especially in London, had always been inclined to swallow the German whispering propaganda that Germany could at any moment have a walk-over into Czechoslovakia and smash the whole country’s defences, ending the war within three or four days, was suddenly brought to its senses, and began dimly to realise that here stood a small but compact and first-class military Power blocking the road to German hegemony. Germany fully appreciated the situation, and immediately started intrigues in London to secure Czechoslovak demobilisation. The intrigues were accompanied by a renewal of the most violent propaganda campaign, in which all the old stories of Czechoslovak “bru-

ality ” to “ defenceless ” Sudeten Germans were trotted out again, this time in the form of hair-raising stories about a brutal and licentious soldiery.

I visited alone, and of course without any consultation of the Czechoslovak authorities, as many parts of the Sudeten districts as I could at this time, and ascertained the absolute baselessness of German allegations. The Czech troops kept entirely to themselves in their barracks and fortifications, and the only “ incidents ” which occurred grew out of pothouse brawls such as happen somewhere every week-end in Britain and receive a two-line notice in some local paper. In Germany, each one provided material for half a dozen vehement radio broadcasts, a diplomatic *démarche* in Prague and endless columns of newspaper. Two Germans who, after heavy drinking in a frontier inn, had defied the orders to halt of Czechoslovak sentinels on the night after mobilisation, had dashed past at high speed on a motor-cycle and both been shot dead, provided excellent martyr material, which the Henleinists used well in a huge propagandist funeral. Unable to get there myself, I sent down an assistant, who made verbatim notes of Henlein’s impassioned funeral oration. It was so full of incitement that the censor prevented its publication. Two months later a Henleinist was stabbed to death in another part of the country during a public-house brawl with Germans of different political views. On this occasion K. H. Frank pronounced the funeral oration. It was every whit as inflammatory and as full of incitements as the unpublished oration of Henlein had been. In fact, it was word for word the same oration, as the notes of my assistant proved!

After a very brief lull in the most extreme form of radio propaganda against Czechoslovakia, the storm set in again with greater violence than ever. Now it was supported by diplomatic action so regular that one morning a Czechoslovak Foreign Office official said to me, with every appearance of concern, “ Berlin has something up her sleeve for us again. There has been no *démarche* by Dr. Eisenlohr ” (the German Minister to Czechoslovakia) “ since the day before yesterday.” On each of the three electoral week-ends I motored through Sudeten territory and noted again how unobtrusive the Czechs had made the troops manning the frontiers despite the obvious tamping of bridges with explosives, the erection of formidable barriers near the frontier and the creation of tank traps.

The elections brought the expected majorities in most Sudeten communes for the Henleinists. For the Germans there was no other Party to vote for except those of the Social Democrats and Communists. Thanks to the stampeding of their own leaders in March, the Catholic and the peasant, unless he wished to subscribe to the doctrines of Karl Marx, which neither Catholic nor peasant could generally be expected to do, had no choice but to vote for the Henleinist candidate. This did not mean that he was really a Nazi, still less that he desired to see the thousand-year-old frontiers of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia destroyed and the thousand years of common life in the same State with the Slavonic Czechs brought to an end. *Pace* Lord Runciman and Mr. Chamberlain, the issue of annexation by Germany was at no time and in no form put before the Sudeten German elector. It was the ideal of an insignificant minority of youthful hotheads between about fourteen and twenty-two years of age. It was, I am confident, never a live issue for the vast majority of Henleinists until their fugitive leader suddenly proclaimed it as such a few days before Britain and France imposed it on the indignant and unwilling President and Government of Czechoslovakia by the exercise of the most extreme pressure. The majority of Henleinists wanted autonomy, the right to run their own affairs in their own way without the risk of officious interference by Czech officials appointed from Prague. It could not have been expected of them to appreciate how difficult it was for Prague to satisfy this seemingly reasonable demand without imperilling the security of the State. If you can imagine a Great Britain populated by 9,000,000 Englishmen, pressed to grant home rule to 3,500,000 Irishmen, but with the Atlantic Ocean solid land and populated by 75,000,000 highly disciplined and militarised Irishmen under the rule of an Irish dictator whose self-proclaimed aim was that of expansion right across a continent to which the United Kingdom was the last obstacle, you can see what the average Henleinist can hardly be expected to have appreciated. To accept the Henleinist majority as a majority for union with Germany, as Mr. Chamberlain and his supporters professed to do, was to brush aside entirely the facts of the case. The severance of these ancient economic ties within Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia spelt economic disaster. Henlein himself maintained this for years in London, and to foreigners generally, in proof of his alleged loyalty to the

Czechoslovak Republic. And this at least was true. How true was proved by the fact that hardly had the Runciman Mission seen its final objective achieved—the destruction of Czechoslovakia’s independence through Germany’s annexation of the Sudeten areas—than one of its members was at work again. In the name of justice to the Sudeten Germans, these had been separated from Czechoslovakia. Now in the name of justice to the Sudeten Germans it was demanded that there should be some sort of customs union between rump Czechoslovakia and Germany on the grounds that “Sudeten German industry cannot exist without the Czech hinterland”.

Precisely. But before, the Czech hinterland had been independent, controlled by the democratic republic of Czechoslovakia, which was allied to France and Soviet Russia against the Fascist dictatorships. That Republic had allowed liberty of speech and of the Press, denied to the seventy odd millions of Fascist Germany, and was consequently a constant menace to the dictator’s grip over the German masses. It had had a Czech Socialist Party, a German Socialist Party. Worst of all, it had had a large and active Communist Party, which had shown itself to be not subversive in this free country, but intensely patriotic and entirely disciplined. Therefore the Sudeten area which with its natural and constructed fortresses was the key to the whole country’s independence, had to be separated from the Czech areas, and President and Republic somehow bullied, bamboozled or beguiled out of putting its highly efficient defensive organisation into action. Now this had been done, the Mission had fulfilled its mission. What was left was an amorphous, ragged strip of territory inhabited by a finally demoralised and helpless collection of Czechs, deprived, at Germany’s behest, of their democratic leaders, at the mercy of a reactionary minority whom the Power on whom they were now dependent for the right to breathe could put at the head of affairs where and when Germany liked. The great danger—that of a successful resistance by a democracy to Fascism—had been banned. No matter if at the same time a bastion of Britain had fallen. A bastion of liberty had been stormed by reaction, the handful of Haves fortified against the horde of Have-nots. So now one could afford to recognise the truth: that Sudeten German and Czech were indissolubly linked



together by economic ties, and bring them together again—under the iron control of Berlin.

The proofs of military preparedness and efficiency furnished by the Czechoslovak mobilisation put an end to the whispering campaign in London and its echoes throughout the world that it was no use to "Stand by Czecho", as the London crowds later shouted to Chamberlain to speed him on his mission of effecting her final destruction. Now the whisperers began to say that Czechoslovakia was doomed to be strangled in Germany's economic grip. Germany could cut her communications by land and water, could refuse to buy from her and to export to her. The negotiations for the necessary adjustment following on Germany's annexation of Austria of commercial arrangements between Czechoslovakia and Germany were opened in Berlin towards the end of May, only to be immediately and noisily adjourned by Germany as an indication to the world that she really had a stranglehold on the Republic. Curiously enough, while applying every kind of internal subversive, external diplomatic and military pressure to break the steady courage of this little nation, Germany did nothing about this vaunted stranglehold. There was, of course, a good reason—the stranglehold did not exist. Germany, through her national bankruptcy, had long been forced to cut down all her imports to the barest necessities. If she took goods from Czechoslovakia, it was because she could not get them elsewhere and had to have them. Germany was literally bankrupt. She could pay cash for nothing—only offer manufactures in exchange. If Czechoslovakia imported from Germany, it was because she could use just this quantity of German manufactures, and no more, in exchange for her own exports to Germany. Solvent countries can divert their purchases in any direction because sound currencies are everywhere acceptable. But Germany had no sound currencies. And other countries were already taking as many pairs of binoculars, motor-cars, railway engines and pairs of spectacles as they could do with. Germany could not deprive Czechoslovakia of markets except by depriving herself of absolutely essential imports—for she took no others. The economic boycott was just another piece of Fascist bluff. And Germany had only to mention a transit traffic boycott to bring Poland pounding at the door of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Commerce, begging for traffic to reduce the overhead of her expensively created port of Gdynia.



Pull devil, pull painter. As a variation from stirring up trouble in the Sudeten areas, Germany (via Hungary) began in June to agitate the Slovak autonomist puppet. Slovakia has always offered a chink in the Czechoslovak armour. Following a brief period immediately after the War when Hungarian money poured into Slovakia and Hungarian propaganda was at its height, there was never any such thing as Slovak *separatism*. But there were many differences between Czechs and Slovaks. Originally the same people, mountain ranges and very different foreign overlords had brought, in the course of centuries, many divergencies before the end of the last World War brought union. Under the Austrians the Czechs had become largely industrialised, through Jan Huss liberated from the more bigoted forms of Catholicism. By Thomas G. Masaryk their natural instincts for democracy had been given a firm basis and an American model. The Slovaks, like all the subject races of the feudalistic Magyar overlords, had been kept as close as possible to the condition of a primitive peasantry, given the “ slave complex ” of the subject race and left in the darkness and dreams of almost mediæval superstition.

The Czechs brewed beer in Pilsen and drank it icy cold. The Slovaks grew wine in their sunny valleys, distilled from it many pleasing varieties of spirits and found in them, gipsy music and the occasional careless largesse of the feudal Magyar overlord, an anodyne for desperate poverty and an alphabetism. The Czech, on his exposed, high-lying plains and beside his icy Pilsner, grew to be the Yorkshireman or the Prussian amongst the Slavs—dour, industrious and level-headed. The Slovak basked in the sunshine and mellowed in his wine. The Czech stuck to his last—the Czechs were incidentally the cobblers *par excellence* of the Monarchy—and the Slovak laughed and sang. With liberation came the need for State officials and administrators. From such walks of life the Magyars had always excluded the Slovak; the pleasure-loving Austrian had gladly employed the industrious Czech in such subordinate posts throughout the Monarchy. So it was but natural that the Czechs should supply the first officials and administrators for Slovakia. It was unwise, but also unfortunately quite natural, that those first officials and administrators should have felt themselves in clover and have determined to stay on there even when there were plenty of Slovaks available to take their place. It was unfortunate, but also quite natural, that an entirely priest-

ridden and backward Slovak peasantry should have seen in the vital alliances with Republican France and Soviet Russia which ensured the independence of the Republic, little else but alliances with the devil incarnate and authentic, complete with horns, hoofs and Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*. True, only thirty per cent. of the population stood behind the fanatic village priest Father Hlinka in his autonomist programme, but the remainder were split among all sorts and conditions of inefficient parties, and Father Hlinka's voice sounded twice as loud through the ever-ready Hungarian megaphone. So that when in June 1938 Father Hlinka sang his swan song, a few weeks before his death, before big autonomist demonstrations in Bratislava and elsewhere, assisted by the American Slovak delegation of Dr. Hletko armed with the original "Pittsburgh Treaty"—in reality no treaty, but an agreement as to how a number of Czech and Slovak *émigrés*, including Thomas G. Masaryk, intended to work for the ultimate union of the two subject races in an independent State—Premier Hodza had to go down to run counter-demonstrations for Czech and Slovak unity. And behind the wild-eyed, hot-blooded Father Hlinka stood, quite incongruously, that cold fish from the North with gold-rimmed spectacles, Konrad Henlein. But the already dying, muddle-headed old priest was a good enough stick with which to beat the hated dog of Czechoslovak democracy—good enough, too, to be canonised as Führer and saint. Equally useful to Germany were the outrageous claims which Poland based on a mere handful of 80,000 Poles in Teschen who had every kind of political and economic liberty which the chauvinistic Poles refused to their own minorities and were themselves denied in Germany. But they had also Czechoslovakia's essential coal-fields. Germany's utterly incongruous support of these Polish claims eventually presented Poland with something like twice the number of Czechs as a minority as she acquired Poles from Czechoslovakia.

No summer can ever be the same to me again as every summer was before this of 1938 spent in Prague. Summer has for me always, particularly since I came twelve years ago to Vienna, and Vienna taught me her great lesson of how to live each leisure moment as intensely as every hour of work, been the season for which the three others were but the preparation. Summer has meant for me half-hours snatched from work to soak up

reserves of energy from the hot Central European sun, to stretch one's limbs and muscles in and under water, to hide for a few hours on calmer week-ends from the dictatorship of the telephone bell which dominates every foreign correspondent's life, beside some rippling mountain stream and pit one's cunning against that of wily, orange-spotted trout. In this sad summer of 1938 I forgot all these lessons of Vienna, absorbed in watching the superhuman efforts of the last stronghold of democracy in Central Europe to hold out against the devilish ingenuity of those who never ceased day or night to plot its destruction and seemed untiring in finding some new point of attack. And the real danger came never from the open enemy, but from the false friend, for that was the attack to which no resistance could be offered, since it came always in the subtle guise of warnings and of good counsel. And all of it—open attack, false friendship and (carefully concealed) pressure to disastrous surrender—centred on one little, iron-nerved man, born a schoolmaster and brought from a professor's chair into public life, Edouard Beneš, co-founder with Masaryk of the democratic Republic of Czechoslovakia. And this was no sudden strain to which a man strengthened by years of ease was subjected, but the culmination of attacks which had never really ceased since the end of the strain of war and conspiratorial activities had brought the wiry little ex-schoolmaster into the limelight as his new-founded country's Foreign Minister.

After twelve years spent in the very heart of Vienna, I had taken a flat in a villa on the outskirts of Prague, not far from the airport and not far from the Hradshin, the palace of the old kings of Bohemia, now the official residence of the President of the Republic, hoping for a peaceful summer to enable me to learn a new and difficult language and to study at ease all details of a complicated situation with the outlines of which I was already familiar. Instead, I found myself plunged into a whirl of work under new, unfamiliar and difficult conditions which hardly left me time to eat and sleep. Yet when, after getting to bed at 4 a.m. night after night, I got up still tired but rested at 9 or 10 a.m., my first news was often that of all-night conferences at the Hradshin on the most vital questions for the country, followed by a reception at 9 a.m.—sometimes at 7.30—by Beneš of some cold-blooded and bullying diplomat presenting a whole sheaf of new, nerve-wracking problems. I

realised that in comparison with my distinguished neighbour I was living the idle life of a pasha.

The President's steadiness and endurance were but the reflection of that shown by all his people. They, too, were subjected to the daily bullying of a powerful neighbour carried out over a radio which they could all hear and a Press the echoes of which they were compelled in their own papers to read. They it was who on May 21st went so gladly and so gallantly to man the defences of their frontiers against frightful odds. One day, lunching with someone connected with the Runciman Mission who pumped me hard as to my views of the situation here, giving nothing in return, I was asked about the general spirit of the people. I expressed my conviction that they were utterly fearless and utterly determined to defend with all the strength of a small but highly efficient and wonderfully equipped little army the independence which for twenty years they had enjoyed to the very last, aided or not. And I was told, "Yes, I am afraid you are right. There seems to be something rather primitive, barbaric, about the Czechs, something uncivilised. Apparently they think of war and self-defence as something which has to be reckoned with in the last resort, and, as you say, they seem to be determined to fight, even against hopeless odds. That is a notion which, thank God, we have grown out of in England, where we regard war as something so unspeakably beastly that we would accept any alternative rather than face that." I choked for a moment, swallowed half a glass of wine and collected myself enough to ask:

"Then England would never under any circumstances defend herself against aggression again?"

"England", I was told, "would, thank God, never allow herself to be led into the beastliness of war again under any circumstances." Then, as though allowing me a debating point, my *vis-à-vis* said, "Perhaps if the country's actual independence was threatened and there were no alternative between the loss of it and resistance".

"And do you not think that this is the case with Czechoslovakia to-day? Do you not see that for this country there is no choice but resistance or utter and final downfall?"

"That", I was told coldly, "is altogether different. How can you compare this country with the British Empire?"

After the moving proofs of Czechoslovak courage—not of

blind courage, but of serious, fully comprehending, anxious but quite irreducible courage which I was receiving daily, almost hourly, I really did not see how I could, and quietly subsided.

Throughout the summer there hung over Prague the shadow of war. Morning after morning I watched as I worked on my sunny balcony the aeroplanes providing target practice for the anti-aircraft batteries. As the little white puffs of smoke in the sky marked the aim of the gunners and the “ pop ! ” of the explosion, so reminiscent of wartime “ Archies ”, made my *Schnauzer*, a soundly Red Floridsdorf mongrel, born in the Arbeiterstrandbadgasse in Vienna during the February 1934 shelling of the workers’ homes, and consequently mildly shell-shocked from birth, take cover with gallant efforts to conceal his trembling beneath my chair, I wondered how many weeks it would be before I saw real shells fired at really hostile aeroplanes. Night after night I motored home in the small hours from my office in the heart of Prague to see the long, accusing fingers of searchlights concentrating in spinster-like scorn on a detected sinning plane. Day after day I had to cope with the intricacies of new “ plans ” of the Government to appease the unappeasable. The “ Second Hodza Plan ” succeeded the first, the third the second, the fourth the third and the fifth the fourth. Each one was stillborn, as the Czechs knew all the time in their hearts that they would be, because there was only one plan which Henlein would ever accept : the plan demanded by his master—destruction of the democratic bastion of Czechoslovakia, whose very existence endangered his totalitarian dictatorship at home, whose military power stood between him and the oilwells of Rumania, the granaries of Hungary. But unceasingly came the pressure from London, coupled with the hint : “ You must gain time for us all by yielding again ”.

Somewhere I saw someone in a letter to the editor of some British or American newspaper writing about “ Czechoslovakia’s Calvary ” and “ Czechoslovakia’s Crucifixion ”, and noticed the next day some Colonel Blimp or Councillor Blimp getting very hot under the collar about it in print. It was not the sort of comparison which would spring very easily to my own lips, but during this tragic summer it constantly forced itself into my consciousness. I have called the Czechs the Yorkshiremen or the Prussians among the Slavs. They are that—but only among the Slavs. And there is a childlike—if you will, a Christlike—

quality which cannot be eradicated in all of the Slavonic peoples. The leaders of Czechoslovakia did, of course, know that all these carefully worked out "Plans" were foredoomed to failure before, or rather at the very moment when they were put on paper, because the fiat had gone forth from Berlin to accept nothing. Yet the Czechs produced them to satisfy the repeated demands made on them from London by the Chamberlain Government, and here I think they let the childlike quality of their race lead them into folly. I talked to Cabinet Ministers, high officials and army officers, and they were all inspired by an evident distrust of the Chamberlain policy. Yet they could not, did not want to believe in the baseness of the betrayal which was being prepared for them. If they made yet another concession, they argued, Britain would be morally bound to stand by them in the last extremity. And always they were misled by the argument of Britain's self-interest, not appreciating that the interests of Britain as a world Power were one thing, and the fears entertained by Mr. Chamberlain as to what might happen to the Haves if Hitler's bluff were called or if Hitler forced himself into a disastrous war, quite another. So their leaders produced "Plans" to the *n*th degree—and with each concession of what had been declared last week to be inconcedable, they undermined the national morale, and insinuated into the astounding national determination to resist another hint that, after all, it might also be possible to surrender.

And what would I have done? I don't know—probably collapsed under British pressure early in May. But I know what I should have done—taken my stand on the May mobilisation position and refused either to demobilise or to budge in any respect. And, above all, I ought to have defied the Franco-British efforts to bully me into destroying my country after Berchtesgaden, declared that I would hold my fortifications *und es darauf ankommen lassen*—and have let come what might come. To be quite honest, I often let myself be persuaded by the Czechs that perhaps the successive "Plans" produced under British pressure might conceivably help by securing British support, although in my heart I knew it was not so. But Berchtesgaden—never. I knew, and said at once, that with the acceptance of that, Czechoslovakia had committed suicide. Yet there came resurrection—and one more chance. Czechoslovakia dismissed the "Surrender Government" which had agreed to give up the



Sudeten Areas and the forts. Their successors should have at once disowned the surrender and defied the oppressor. For a few hours they intended to do so. Came another Anglo-French *démarche*, and all was over. It was over because the ally who did not rat—Russia—had made it clear that she was willing to fulfil her obligations to the letter, to defend Czechoslovakia against unprovoked aggression after France had begun to fulfil her own obligations in this respect, and to go beyond them—to defend Czechoslovakia even if France ratted: but one condition. This was that not a yard of fortifications were voluntarily surrendered.

The reactionary wing of the Czech Agrarians, Germany and reactionaries in many other countries busily circulated the story that Russia had said she was too weak to fulfil her obligations. It was even stated in a broadcast from Prague given under reactionary official influences. I have the best of reasons for knowing that it was not merely a lie, but the precise opposite of the truth.

Here is the story, as told me by a friend of Dr. Beneš, of what actually happened. On the Sunday immediately before Britain and France forced Beneš to agree to the surrender of the Sudeten districts, after Berchtesgaden, Beneš sent for the Russian Minister to Czechoslovakia, Alexandrovsky, to see him in the Hradschin. Russia had already been unofficially sounded as to whether, if asked formally, she would be prepared to defend Czechoslovakia if France should let her down, and had indicated that the answer would be favourable. To Alexandrovsky Beneš formally put the following two questions:

“ If we are attacked and France comes to our assistance in accordance with the terms of our two treaties, will Russia also fulfil her obligations and furnish military aid to France and Czechoslovakia? ”

Alexandrovsky replied without hesitation, “ Instantly, and with all her strength. Why do you ask? ”

Then Beneš said, “ If France dishonours her signature and refuses to help, what would be Russia’s advice to this country as to the right course to pursue? ”

Alexandrovsky replied, “ Denounce Germany immediately as the aggressor before the League and call for League support. Germany will automatically be branded as aggressor by refusing to obey the League’s summons to state a case, as of course she will refuse. Russia will then fulfil her obligations under the



League Covenant, and come to your assistance regardless of what the other League Powers may do."

After this there was a long silence between the two, broken at last by Alexandrovsky saying :

" M. le President, is there not another question you wish to ask me regarding Russia's action should an appeal to the League be made impossible by some trickery or other? "

Beneš looked at him for a long time very steadily, but did not open his mouth. Silently Alexandrovsky rose, shook his head sadly, bowed and left.

Thus did the man whom the Goebbels propaganda machine was denouncing daily as a " Red " refrain from calling in the direct aid of Russia which he knew was available for him and which might have saved his country's independence.

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Throughout this long, tragic summer the vultures gathered around Czechoslovakia—vultures of the breed to which I belong myself as a foreign correspondent. The Czechs noticed grimly in their Press that they were mostly war correspondents such as Knickerbocker and Harrison, of the *News Chronicle*, who had been through the wars in Manchuria, Abyssinia or Spain. Came great bankers, anxious about invested capital. Came Right-wing conspirators from many countries, anxious to lend Hitler a hand in the game of dismembering Czechoslovakia. Came Left-wing enquirers, anxious to lend a hand in " debunking " the plotted betrayal. Prominent among the latter was Claude Cockburn, whom the Americans call the " *enfant terrible* of British journalism", who from so staid a background as foreign correspondent of *The Times* has become in his mimeographed news sheet *The Week* the supreme debunker of British and international politics, the uncomfortable revealer of skeletons in the British cupboard, on lines familiar to Americans from various publications, but otherwise unknown in Britain. Came representatives of the Socialist twopenny weekly, the *Tribune*—which incidentally in its own rude way I found, to my surprise, more consistently right about what was really going on in Central Europe than any other weekly published in London. Came parties of the Left Book Club of Victor Gollancz, eager for first-hand information about this incredible betrayal of a democracy which was progressing so blandly under their very noses. Came Members of Parliament, some of course with their minds made up on the basis of no

information at all, most of them with open if sometimes naïve minds, determined to get at the facts. Came political quacks and cranks, pushing every kind of political nostrum. Came—gee, how they came!—the “ T.W.’s ”—the Time-Wasters, the bane of a foreign correspondent’s life, about whom I unbosomed myself at great length in my contribution to a book published in the States this autumn.\* Schoolmasters from the Midlands, leaders of “ Y ’s—Y.M.C.A.’s—from the Middle West, lady lecturers, occasional writers, sociologists, criminologists and entomologists—social-credit prophets, pacifists and the reverse—all eager to have “ just an hour or so with you to ask you *all about* Czechoslovakia, because I do admire your messages so ”. It was flattering, no doubt, but in the terrific rush of work, the impossibility to find enough time to eat proper meals and to sleep through to a refreshed awakening, one would have gladly dispensed with the compliments in order to be able to work undisturbed. After all, the foreign correspondent’s job is to acquire information and to impart it in print, not to act as Public Relations Counsellor, Cook’s Guide and Volume “ CZE ” of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* to all and sundry. I took what defensive measures I could to escape the onslaught—avoided my office as far as possible and worked at home, having had my home telephone number put on the “ very secret ” list and threatened the direst penalties to anyone in my office who revealed it. I established a heavy “ outer-office ” barrage to protect myself from interruptions, but of course I was “ landed ” in nine cases out of ten. There were days when I reached my office to find four cards lying on my desk from complete strangers whose cross-questioning I had escaped. I was just five short of a pack of these when the second Czech mobilisation and the war scare scattered abruptly all those who had no professional business in Prague. To them all if they read these lines I apologise for all my subterfuges—but I had somehow to get through my work.

Among the stream of visitors there was one surprising blank. While British Cabinet Ministers were scurrying back and forth to Germany and France, not one visited Czechoslovakia, the country whose life was at stake in all these conferences. Not one found it necessary to hear from Beneš his views on the problems of his country which he was defending so gallantly,

\* *We Saw It Happen*. New York, Simons and Schuster.

his back against the wall. Nor was it thought worth while to invite any Czechoslovak Minister to London. From start to finish, Czechoslovakia was treated as the ball to be tossed to and fro between London, Paris and Berlin.

In June came an interlude which was almost entirely misunderstood abroad—the Tenth Sokol Congress. The Sokols are gymnasts who meet every six years to give the most amazing mass gymnastic exhibitions to be seen anywhere in the world. And this was all the world knew about the Sokol Congress in Prague. But the Sokol organisations have a far more important function than the holding of gymnastic displays. They were founded at the time when oppression of the Slavonic minorities by the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was at its height. Without universities, without cultural organisations to form a bond between the Slavs whom Austria-Hungary controlled on the principles of *divide et impera*, the Sokol organisations were devised with the task of providing a connecting link between all the Slavs of the Monarchy which should be in its form of drill an expression of the true Slav temperament, and should at the same time develop the feeling of Slav brotherhood. As I sat in Prague Stadium and watched 30,000 men in white shirts and navy-blue trousers marching as one great, perfectly controlled machine and performing as one man a series of beautiful rhythmic movements before Beneš and 300,000 spectators, I realised how well the founders had succeeded in providing a medium for the expression of the Slav temperament in the gymnastic arena. For in all these Sokol movements, despite their absolute precision, there was nothing of military discipline, nothing of the barrack square. There was no Führer, no commander. The movements were a supreme expression of self-discipline, the communal spirit and voluntary “pulling together”. In thousands of towns and villages throughout the Republic little groups of men and women had for a year been rehearsing in their spare time to identical music. Now these thousands of separately trained units had come together for the first time in Prague. And after one single mass rehearsal, they were performing the appointed movements to the familiar music as one man. At a given note the 30,000 swayed gracefully forwards like some great sea of corn, the white singlets disappeared, and one saw only a vast symmetrical design in navy blue. They swayed over backwards towards the President’s

box, and the blue vanished leaving a sea of white. Then the 30,000, still only to music, formed into marching columns and with the steady, easy gymnastic swing so unlike the goose-step or even the “ quick march ” of the parade ground, although quite as precise, swung steadily out of the arena. Coming after the mobilisation of May 21st and the successful manning of the frontier defences, the Sokol Congress, with all the traditions of unity, self-discipline and self-sacrifice which it implied, roused the spirits of the Czechoslovak people to a white heat of patriotism and welded them as never before or since into one united family. It did much more—it provided for a moving expression of Slav unity, reaching far across the frontiers of the State.

In Germany the significance of the Sokol Congress was never under-estimated, and every effort was made through Colonel Beck in Poland and M. Stojadinovitch in Belgrade to prevent it from becoming a demonstration of international Slav brotherhood as in past years, and to produce a feeling of isolation for Czechoslovakia. Colonel Beck was successful in securing the official abstention of the Polish Sokols from the Congress. But large individual delegations of Polish Sokols took part. In Yugoslavia M. Stojadinovitch was unable to prevail against the great wave of sympathy felt for Czechoslovakia among both Serbs and Croats, and the official Yugoslav delegations produced the wildest scenes of enthusiasm in the streets of Prague, responding to the cheers with shouts of “ We shall stand by you whatever anyone may say ”. “ They shall not pass our frontiers ”, the Prague crowds roared back. Rumanian delegations also came to Prague, and were received with equal enthusiasm. Although the Sokol movement is purely Slav in origin, King Carol had been so impressed at the previous Sokol Congress in Prague six years before that he had started a similar movement in Rumania, which now for the first time joined in displays with its prototype. So seriously did the Nazis take the Sokol Congress as a political factor that Henlein, on instructions, even organised a great counter-demonstration at Chomotov.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### ENTER LORD RUNCIMAN

AFTER THE DEPARTURE OF KONRAD HENLEIN FROM PRAGUE to the Sudeten areas on May 24th with a refusal to return for negotiations until all special precautions for defence of the frontiers were abolished, negotiations between the Czechoslovak Government and sub-leaders of the Sudeten Party—usually Kundt, Peters, Rosche or Sebekowsky—began in Prague. Knowing as I did the background to these, Germany's real intentions and the plans of Mr. Chamberlain, I never entertained any illusions as to the final outcome of this fencing before the mirror by the Henleinists. Both parties were pledged to secrecy as to details, but naturally the general lines of the discussions became known fairly quickly. The basis of the first "Plan" of the Czechoslovak Government was to confer full autonomy on new Diets in the historic provinces of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. This the Henleinists rejected on the grounds that they would not have a majority in these Diets—which was, of course, inevitable, seeing that for a thousand years the Germans have only been a minority in these Provinces. Pretending that they wished to return to the position of 1918, the Henleinists were really trying to draw up a frontier which had never existed on any map—the language frontier—and to split these ancient territories asunder. The Czechoslovak Government was sincerely determined to remodel the whole State, and to make it no longer a "national State" in which the dominant race, the Czechoslovaks, granted even the most liberal concessions to minorities, but a "State of Nationalities" from which the very word "minority" should vanish and the country be metamorphosed from "Czechoslovakia" into a composite "Czecho-Germano-Slovak-Polono-Hungaro-Ruthenia". Now the Czechoslovak Government offered to provide "National *Kurien*" within the provincial Diets, parliamentary committees to be formed from the deputies of the various nationalities and alone entitled to legislate in matters affecting

the nationality concerned. It was no good. Every fresh concession was met by the usual Nazi tactics, treated as a sign of weakness and made the jumping-off point for fresh demands. The Czechoslovak Government laboured day and night on the three new nationalities laws—the Language Law, the Cultural Autonomy Law and the Political and Administrative Reform Law. So far did these measures go in yielding to the dangerous demands of the Henleinists, dictated by Berlin and backed by Britain and a reluctant France, that more than once there was danger of a revolt in the Cabinet against the surrender of vital interests. “Should we decide to recommend”, a member of the Runciman Mission asked me one day, “a solution so far-reaching as to be unacceptable to the leaders of the political parties, would the Hodza Government’s authority be sufficient to carry it through?” I told him immediately “No”. “Would the authority of Beneš be sufficient?” he asked me. With some hesitation I replied, “I believe it would. But you will never get the President to consent to anything which would threaten the integrity of the Republic as it stands to-day.” My interlocutor said no more, and I felt guilty of having helped to concentrate the storm for surrender on one man.

In June the Henleinists presented a memorandum of their own demands based, with some modification, on the Karlsbad programme of Konrad Henlein, and the Government agreed to regard it, together with the drafts of the new laws it was itself preparing, as a basis for negotiation. Early in July the Government allowed it to be known that two of the Sudeten Party’s demands were quite unacceptable. One was that legislative powers should be conferred on the Henleinist *Volkstag* or Party Congress. The other was that sole control of police should be handed over to the Henleinists, which would have meant that the Nazi Storm-troop formations of the Party would have been given full charge of the lives and liberties of all inhabitants of the Sudeten areas. The Government offered a new scheme—autonomous communal councils in combination with autonomous Diets, “National *Kurien*” and complete cultural and educational autonomy. The Henleinists announced that “there is nothing in these proposals which induces us to have confidence in the Government’s intentions”.

On July 10th Henlein went to Munich to confer with Hitler, all pretence that he was anything but the German Chancellor’s

local representative having been dropped. On July 19th the Henleinists published details of their memorandum to the Government. Their demands included the partition of Czechoslovakia into self-governing States divided according to language frontiers, the surrender of control of police to themselves and the withdrawal of State police from the Sudeten districts. Immediately afterwards, in pursuance of promises given by Mr. Chamberlain to Herr von Dirksen, the German Ambassador in London, British pressure on President Beneš was again renewed. This pressure followed on the visit of Hitler's adjutant, Capt. Wiedemann, to London. In the Sudeten areas the organised whispering propaganda began to fix new dates for "Adolf Hitler's triumphant entry".

On July 25th Mr. Chamberlain announced that he had asked Viscount Runciman to go to Prague as unofficial "adviser and mediator". I have given in a previous chapter details of the way in which Lord Runciman was forced upon the Czechoslovak Government. That acute observer of British politics, "Ferdie" Kuhn, the *New York Times* Correspondent in London, wrote that this appointment would

"come as another proof—if any were needed—that Mr. Chamberlain is exerting strenuous pressure in Prague to make Czechoslovakia satisfy the Sudeten Germans and their real leaders in Berlin. Apparently the British are not sending a comparable emissary to Berlin, or even considering such a step. . . . Mr. Chamberlain decided it would be wise to send as a 'mediator' someone authoritative enough to push the Czechs into some sort of agreement which the Germans would accept. The name of Lord Runciman was suggested first to the French, who complained that he did not know enough about Central Europe, and to the Czechs, who objected violently to any 'mediator' from outside. But in the end the French agreed, although with little enthusiasm, and Lord Runciman's title was changed to 'adviser' in the hope of placating the Czechs. It is believed that Mr. Chamberlain will refer to him in this way to-morrow—if the Prime Minister takes the House of Commons into his confidence at all. . . . It is recalled that when Lord Runciman arrived in New York early last year he announced that Britain was 'not going to bribe anybody to leave her alone. You know well enough what it means to pay tribute—demands for more and more tributes' he said on that occasion.

"Lord Runciman was speaking of German colonial demands and of the tribute that Britain was being asked to pay. It remains to be seen whether he will take the same attitude at Prague when demands are being made by a stronger nation upon a weaker one and when non-payment of 'tributes' might lead to war."

Immediately on the heels of the British announcement that Lord Runciman was going to Prague, the Czechoslovak Government published details of the draft nationality statutes. It



proved to be a Magna Carta for the nationalities. The first article, re-establishing the equality of all citizens of the Republic, declared that neither language, race nor religion justified distrust in the loyalty of any citizen. The second article based nationality on the mother-tongue and allowed every citizen to select his own nationality, provided he mastered the language, at the age of eighteen. The third article provided penalties for the use of any pressure to change nationality. Proportionality in State employment and the allotment of State contracts was established in the fifth article, which also provided for preferential employment as State employees of persons belonging to the prevailing local nationality. The sixth article provided for the proportional allotment of public revenues to the nationalities. Full educational and cultural autonomy was provided. The entire measure was immediately denounced by the Henleinists as useless.

Before Lord Runciman arrived, Mr. Chamberlain's statement alleging that the Czechoslovak Government had asked for him, had to be corrected in a semi-official Czechoslovak statement.

"When Mr. Chamberlain emphasised in his speech that Lord Runciman's visit was being made 'at the request of the Czechoslovak Government'", the statement ran, "he presumably meant to say that after the Czechoslovak Government had been informed of Mr. Chamberlain's intention to send such an 'investigator and conciliator' the Czechoslovak Government requested that such a person should be sent now, and not at the conclusion of the present negotiations with the Sudeten Party." It was particularly resented in Prague that Mr. Chamberlain should have conveyed the impression that the initiative came from Prague to London, whereas the contrary was the case. There was also considerable disappointment over the fact that after the Czechs had given their reluctant consent, Mr. Chamberlain announced that Britain was in no way committed by the dispatch of the Mission. The Czechoslovak Government had understood that if it agreed to Mr. Chamberlain's proposal, he would admit at least moral responsibility for seeing that a satisfactory settlement with the Henleinists was reached. Rightly or wrongly, Czechoslovakia felt that it had been tricked by the British Premier.

The Henleinists greeted the Runciman appointment as a victory for the Nazi cause—as, of course, it was. The Party

organ, *Die Zeit*, declared in an editorial with great satisfaction that Mr. Chamberlain had put a spoke in the wheel by preventing the Czechoslovak Government from bringing the Nationalities Statute before Parliament through the dispatch of Lord Runciman. In point of fact the Government announced next day that the meeting of Parliament which was to have discussed the Nationalities Bills would be purely formal and would be adjourned without discussion.

Lord Runciman was welcomed at the station, not only by representatives of the Government, but by two Henleinist leaders, Herr Kundt and Dr. Sebekowsky, who were presented to him by the British Minister, Mr. Basil Newton. A couple of hours later Lord Runciman received the Press in the Alcron Hotel and took the opportunity of expressing his thanks to the Nazi leaders for their welcome. "This is granting belligerent rights to our Franco before he has even started the open rebellion", grumbled a Czech editor to me, *sotto voce*. Lord Runciman's thoughtful staff had arranged a little platform for him, right at the entrance to the Alcron dining-room, instead of letting him appear at the far end, as is of course usual when the room is used for such receptions. There were two good reasons for this precaution. One was the presence at the far end of a dainty bronze nude of a young girl stretching out her arms invitingly towards whoever might stand immediately before the statue. It was discreetly decided not to give the Press photographers, particularly the French, the chance of doing their worst with Lord Runciman and the statue. The second reason was that doubts were entertained as to the kind of reception which the uninvited mediator might expect from several hundred Czech journalists; the curtains at the other end of the room provided an opportunity for a quick get-away. The forethought of Lord Runciman's staff proved quite superfluous in this respect. He had a sympathetic reception and applause for his brief remarks. Lord Runciman said that he came as "the friend of all and the enemy of none". In official Czech quarters I was told, "The only hope of success for Lord Runciman's Mission depends on his realising from the start that we can make concessions in every respect except one—the granting of full territorial autonomy. That would mean Anschluss and military and economic destruction of our State. We quite understand that Mr. Chamberlain may con-

template this with equanimity. Lord Runciman should realise that we cannot contemplate it at all, and that whatever the odds against our people, they will fight, knowing they face the fate of Belgium, Serbia and worse, rather than accept it."

The first day's work of the Runciman Mission consisted in three brief courtesy calls on members of the Government and two very long conferences with the Sudeten leaders. This struck the keynote of the Mission's activities throughout. The contacts with the Henleinists were long and deep, those with the Government brief and distinctly cool. The Mission endeavoured to surround its doings with every kind of mystery, and refused all information to the Press except for a daily two-line or four-line communiqué which said precisely nothing. Even the question of where Lord Runciman intended to spend his week-ends was made a sort of State secret, although it very soon appeared that these week-ends were all being spent on the estates of German aristocrats who guarded the boundaries of their estates with Henleinist storm-troopers and brought Lord Runciman into close contact with Henleinist leaders in their castles. The task of the journalists "covering" the Runciman Mission was a hard one. "I suppose", I asked one of his staff one Sunday evening, "that I can employ the usual formula and say that Lord Runciman's week-end was entirely non-political, and perhaps add that he caught a couple of trout?" "Please add nothing of the sort", was the agitated reply, "unless you explain that they were caught on Saturday. Lord Runciman is a strict sabbatarian, and would be most upset at any suggestion that he had used a rod on a Sunday."

On August 18th Lord Runciman had his first meeting with Herr Henlein, in Rothenhaus Castle, the seat of Prince Max Egon von Hohenlohe-Langenburg. Lord Runciman was accompanied by his staff, and Henlein by his deputy leaders. Every effort had been made, of course, to keep the meeting secret, naturally without success. As was the case wherever he went in the Sudeten area, Runciman was greeted with the Hitler salute by the Henleinist Nazis massed for the purpose. Two days before Kundt, one of Henlein's deputy leaders, had seen Runciman, and told him that Henlein considered it useless to continue negotiations, since the Government refused to accept the whole of his Karlsbad programme. The day before a Henleinist delegation headed by Kundt, and the Czechoslovak

Inner Cabinet, headed by Dr. Hodza, had met in a three-hour conference, at the conclusion of which Kundt announced that the Government's proposals were quite unacceptable. There was a curious development a day or so later, when an announcement that Dr. Hodza was making a number of important appointments of Germans was issued—by Lord Runciman. Immediately the Henleinists denounced these appointments, for making which Lord Runciman had publicly thanked Dr. Hodza, as meaningless. On August 22nd Henlein held a delegates' conference in Marienbad. Secretly Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin of the Runciman Mission came to Marienbad and had a long conference with Henlein before the meeting of delegates began. All mention of this meeting was suppressed in both the Henleinist and Runciman communiqués, and there was great annoyance when the fact came out a day later. In the intervals of the long conferences with the Henleinists, the Runciman Mission went through the motions of accepting long memoranda drawn up by the German democrats. The value attached to them can easily be gathered from a study of Lord Runciman's report, where the German democratic case is not even mentioned and Henlein is treated throughout as the spokesman of all the Germans.

Immediately after this meeting with Henlein, Ashton-Gwatkin flew to London to report to the Foreign Office. At his first interview with Lord Runciman, Henlein's replies had been evasive and indefinite, having the general tenor, "I can't answer these questions forthwith, but must have an opportunity for consultation". The suggestion was, of course, that he wished to consult his Party leaders. But no one doubted that in reality he had to consult the German Chancellor. It was after giving Henlein an opportunity to do so that Ashton-Gwatkin saw Henlein in Marienbad and conveyed the alarming outcome to London. With the approval, if not at the suggestion, of the Runciman Mission, the Czechoslovak Government now set to work on devising a solution on the basis of the division of the country into twenty-three self-governing cantons. The reply of the Henleinists was an aggressive proclamation "conferring" on all members of the Party "the right of self-defence". The wording made it obvious that the object of the proclamation was really to stir up violence between Henleinists and their opponents in the Sudeten area. The pro-

clamation was issued despite a telephone appeal from London to Henlein to do nothing to aggravate the situation; apparently the fear had revived that there would be some overt action by Germany to destroy Czechoslovakia's independence before British policy could force her to yield without a struggle.

Now above all was the moment when a firm warning from Britain to Germany that an attack on Czechoslovakia would be resisted by Britain, France and Russia could have saved the situation before Hitler had committed himself too far to withdraw. Instead came a statement that Mr. Chamberlain's declaration of March 24th still held good and some very feeble elaboration—so feeble that Lord Halifax, who was to have delivered the speech, refused to do so after Mr. Chamberlain had whittled it down, and it was left to Sir John Simon to make it at Lanark on Saturday, August 27th. Since the only unequivocal declaration about this country in Mr. Chamberlain's statement had been a refusal to promise to help Czechoslovakia if she were attacked, Herr Hitler was fully entitled to regard Sir John Simon's words as sound without even fury, signifying nothing but encouragement, and to go right ahead putting all the fury into the speech he was getting ready for Nuremberg.

Meantime Germany was demonstratively making preparations for an invasion. There had been a partial mobilisation, all men of military age had been forbidden to leave the country and secret-service reports were reaching Prague with suspicious ease and rapidity concerning German concentrations of troops and tanks right around the frontiers of Czechoslovakia. I remembered the complete secrecy with which the preparations for the reoccupation of the Rhineland had been made, and wondered why on this occasion Germany was so anxious to prove her aggressive intentions to the world. Sir Neville Henderson was recalled to London to report on these and on the cumulative attacks on Czechoslovakia in the German Press and wireless. On August 28th there was another secret conference at Rothenhaus Castle between Lord Runciman, Ashton-Gwatkin (who had meanwhile returned from London) and Henlein.

Concerning this conference I wrote :

“ I learn that the possibility of compromise with the Henlein Party must be considered as extremely slender, following the interviews with Herr Henlein. His attitude was extremely difficult and it was a hard task for Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin to persuade him to comply with Lord Runciman's request. After urging moderation and no further pursuit

of the tactics shown in the ' self-defence ' proclamation, Lord Runciman communicated to Henlein the details of the cantonal proposals. Lord Halifax had been informed of these proposals and saw in them a reasonable basis for arriving at a solution midway between the totalitarian demands of the Henleinists for autonomy and the home-rule proposals for the historic provinces made by the Czechoslovak Government."

I added that Lord Runciman had asked Herr Henlein to open negotiations on this basis, and that Henlein had remained deaf to his arguments, insisting on " the Constitution of the German Nation " within the Czechoslovak Republic. " As a result of this interview, it becomes a matter of doubt whether the Henlein Party has the least intention of negotiating at all," I concluded, " and whether further efforts in this direction are not doomed in advance to failure." When Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin saw Herr Henlein two days later, the latter protested against my having given this account of the conversation. Without referring to me, the Runciman Mission immediately issued a statement to placate Herr Henlein, saying that my information was not correct " as to the details " (I had given none) " of the conversation ". When I spoke to the Runciman Mission about this communiqué, little secret was made of the fact that it had been issued to satisfy Henlein, who, I was blandly assured, had been " most helpful ", and deserved encouragement. I could not at that time reveal that the source of my information had been Prince Hohenlohe himself, who had acted as interpreter at the conversation. It was just seven days after I had been given this assurance of his reasonableness and moderation, that Herr Henlein broke off all conversations with Prague on the transparent excuse that one of his deputies had been struck by a policeman while mixing himself up in disorders in Mährisch Ostrau. There followed Herr Hitler's Nuremberg speech, packed with incitements to the Sudeten population, the Henleinist putsch and Henlein's proclamation of revolt, Berchtesgaden, Godesberg, Munich and the end.

In between, the Henleinists presented another memorandum demanding a full surrender to the Karlsbad programme. Senator Wollner, one of their leaders, declared in a speech in Asch that what they demanded in this memorandum was only the beginning of what they were going to demand. He referred openly to " our leader Adolf Hitler ", and said that while they did

not want war, they had a nation of 75,000,000 behind them, and that all Czechs would be forced to leave the Sudeten areas of Czechoslovakia. The bombardment of President Beneš with British demands for more concessions intensified, and the Runciman Mission was in constant conference with the Henleinists. On September 6th, President Beneš received all the Cabinet Ministers in turn, and subsequently held a Cabinet Council, at which he told them that he found it impossible to hold out any longer against Franco-British pressure, which was backed by the threat that if Czechoslovakia did not yield, she need not expect the support of Britain and France. During the previous weekend Henlein, on returning from another visit to Berchtesgaden, had given orders to push matters to a climax and to see that all conversations were broken off at the first possible excuse. Beneš recommended a new plan which was virtually unconditional surrender to Karlsbad, including the grant of full autonomy to the Sudeten areas and the withdrawal of Czechoslovak police. Only in the matter of recognising Nazi ideology was it sought to reach some kind of compromise. Reluctantly Ministers consented to this general capitulation. Dr. Beneš received Herr Kundt and conveyed to him the outlines of the new proposals, asking him to go straight from the Hradschin to Premier Hodza and receive the details in writing. Kundt simply failed to appear, and the proposals were sent to him next day by special courier.

Now the Henleinists had secured everything, and acceptance seemed inevitable. But Henlein's instructions from Berchtesgaden had been imperative—no acceptance, and a break-off of negotiations. Annexation had been decided on, and the hour was at hand. An excuse for breaking off negotiations had to be found without delay, or the Prague Government would publish its surrender, and the Henleinist rank and file might ask what more they were fighting for. It was found in what Mr. Chamberlain much later called "the serious incident at Mährisch Ostrau".

What was this "serious incident"? Stripped of propaganda, just this. An organised demonstration was started on the morning of September 7th by Henleinist storm-troopers against the police, to demand the release of a number of Henleinists who had been under arrest for several weeks on charges of espionage for Germany and gun-running; the arrested men had been caught red-handed preparing an armed revolt. On



this critical Monday the Henleinists organised this rowdy Nazi demonstration, and a Nazi deputy, Karl May, had mixed himself up in it, seizing the bridle of a mounted policeman's horse. To free himself the policeman had struck one blow with his riding-whip at the unknown man, which had touched his shoulder. Alleging that "Deputies, men, women and children have been brutally flogged by police in Mährisch Ostrau", the Henlein Party announced simultaneously that the Government's proposals were unsatisfactory as a basis for negotiations, and that there would be no negotiations until "reparation" had been made for the "outrage" of Mährisch Ostrau. Even the Runciman Mission was speedily able to convince itself of the flimsiness of this excuse and of the tissue of lies which surrounded the single insignificant fact of the blow from a policeman's riding-whip as I have given it above, but although the Czechoslovak authorities suspended the policeman and several other officials, negotiations were never resumed.

There was indeed a story going round, which you are not obliged to believe, that Henlein offered to do so on condition that he be given the post of Minister of the Interior. Hodza is supposed to have replied that he could not do this, but would create for Henlein the post of Minister for Colonies.

"How come?" retorted Henlein. "That's impossible—Czechoslovakia has no colonies."

"What of it?" returned Hodza. "Has not Italy a Minister of Finance and Germany a Minister of Justice?"

Between September 7th, when the Henleinists broke off negotiations, and September 12th, when Herr Hitler was scheduled to speak at Nuremberg, lay four tense days during which the Henleinists pursued delaying tactics in order, as I had long known they would, to let Hitler speak for them. It was during them that at last I complied with the law which I had disobeyed for two months and bought gas-masks for myself and my household. The streets of Prague were empty at 7.30 on the night of September 12th, as everyone who could do so hurried off to hear their fate—the issues of peace and war—decided by the absolute ruler of a foreign State whose frontiers lay less than a couple of hours' motor-run distant. They carried their gas-masks with them, for everyone had to face the possibility that within an hour of the speech beginning they might hear the roar of the first German bombers overhead. And the

Czech nerve held. A dozen people to whom I spoke during the day said, "Is it to be to-night? If so, we are ready. Better an end with terror than terror without end such as we have had to endure ever since March. And you—you cannot let us down, much as your Premier may want you to. You will not be so blind."

But the speech did not bring war. It was full of insults to President Beneš and to Czechoslovakia, and was a deliberate incitement to the Henleinists to revolt with the knowledge that Germany would back them. But before the brink of war Hitler hesitated. And yet for Czechoslovakia it was a disquieting speech—an isolationist speech. It seemed to be addressed above all to the people of Britain and France, to appeal to their fear of war, to assure them that the Nazi war-machine need not be set into operation against them—on one condition. They must leave him to finish with the Czechoslovak Republic. The French need not fear that he intended to take Alsace-Lorraine. The British knew how pacifically Germany had limited her naval programme for their benefit. Poland was reminded that Germany had no quarrel with her. But Czechoslovakia—that collection of liars, torturers of Germans, and criminals—was doomed, and the others had better stand clear. I shall long remember the venomous tone in which the Führer spat out "*Ich spreche von der Tschechoslowakei*"—"I speak of Czechoslovakia". A monstrous creation, designed by French chauvinists to bomb harmless German industrial centres, the Czech State "beat up bloodily three and a half million members of a race of nearly eighty million people if they sang a song, wore stockings, or used a greeting which did not please the Czechs". Like "helpless game they were hunted and baited". "This may be a matter of indifference to the leaders of the democracies, but to us it is not. If these tortured creatures cannot find justice and help for themselves, they will obtain it from us. To believe that such a regime can continue its sins shows incredible blindness." Then came the demand for "self-determination" for the Sudeten Germans and a slap in the face for Britain. "It is not my will that in the heart of Central Europe, through the talents of other statesmen, a second Palestine should be created. The poor Arabs are defenceless and deserted; the Germans in Czechoslovakia are neither defenceless nor deserted."

The speech had bristled with incitements to the Henleinists to revolt with the assurance of Germany's backing, and the echo was prompt. In hundreds of towns and villages the Henleinists poured into the streets as the speech ended, acting on a concerted plan, and started an armed insurrection which had for its main object attacks on the police and gendarmerie and the seizure of public buildings. It was a repetition of Austria's night of horror in March, with the exception that on this occasion the German army did not march, as many of the Henleinist rank and file expected. Prague itself was quiet, and early next morning I motored down to the disturbed areas.

## THE HENLEINIST REBELLION

THE FIRST INDICATION I HAD OF THE HENLEINIST RESPONSE to Hitler's speech was the sight of the banner of rebellion—the Swastika—flying from the turret of a ruined castle on a hill close to Karlsbad. I swung my car into the side-road leading to the village above which the ruins frowned, and found the flag guarded by Henleinist storm-troopers watching the road with field-glasses. I thought that they were keeping watch for the arrival of the gendarmerie, but one of them said to me at once, "Are they marching in? Have you seen the Reichswehr on the road?"

The main streets of Karlsbad were a wreckage of broken glass and shattered plate-glass windows. Shop after shop bearing a Czech or Jewish name had great holes in the windows, many of which had been plundered of their contents. Henleinist despatch-riders were dashing furiously hither and thither on motor-cycles, some flying the Swastika and some the Henleinist pennant. When I tried to photograph the damage in one shop, two Henleinist boys of seventeen or so tried to prevent me, and placed themselves between my camera and the window. But when I told them, "Your faces will look well in print beside this specimen of German culture", they disappeared.

A charabanc filled with Czechoslovak gendarmerie, in their smart grey uniforms with red piping, drove on to the square at Karlsbad and the men began quite slowly to get out. Before half a dozen were on the pavement and had quietly lit up their cigarettes, there was not a Henleinist hero, not a Swastika within sight. It was just one of the dozen proofs I was to receive in the next twenty-four hours, as I had received countless similar proofs in the past months, that the suggestion that the Czechs had let the situation get out of hand and were unable to keep order, was a pure invention. The trouble for the Czechoslovak police and gendarmerie was that British representations and pressure in Prague continually tied their hands behind their backs. The mere sight of a uniform was enough

to send the Henleinist boys scurrying across the frontier to safety in Germany, whence the orders as well as the arms, propaganda and money for revolt had come.

Ten minutes' drive away, in the humble suburb of Fischern, imperial Karlsbad's shabby poor relation, I found the damage far worse. Through Fischern two years before Konrad Henlein's lieutenant had taken me on the grand tour of distressed show-places, and Nazi propaganda had been working intensely there for years. Not a single one of the many humble Jewish shops in the district seemed to have come unscathed through the storm of the night before. No police had yet arrived to "clean up" by their mere appearance, and everywhere hung huge Swastika banners. Right and left, Henleinist storm-troopers greeted me with the Hitler salute and shouted abuse when I ignored it. I drove on through Karlsbad towards Falkenau, Eger, Asch and Graslitz, where the disorders had assumed the most serious proportions. In the hamlet of Chodau, where every available inch of wall-space seemed to have been covered with painted Swastikas and the local workers' co-operative had been stormed and defiled in this way, a Czech chauffeur stopped me and warned me not to go farther.

"Elbogen", he said, "is in the hands of the Nazis and the Swastika banner waves over the castle. In Falkenau the Nazis have killed several gendarmes and are in full control; I had a terrible time getting through, and am thankful to be alive. Half the Eger shops have been smashed up, and the Nazis have burned motor-cars in the streets."

Things turned out to be not quite as bad as he had said, for at picturesque Elbogen, so called from the great "elbow" made by the River Eger around the steep, wooded hill with the castle on the summit, a small detachment of Czech troops had moved in. At each entrance to the town stood an armoured car, and I was compelled to make a wide detour. But Falkenau was as it had been described to me. Mobs of Henleinists held the entrances to the town, and I saw them harrying two unfortunate Czechoslovak police who, although fully armed, were bound by orders—from London—not to defend themselves. Here it was the storm-troopers who compelled me to make a detour round the town and shouted "Hold him up! hold him up!" when I turned down a side-road. By accelerating and driving hard at them, I got through easily.

Some six miles farther on towards the frontier, I noticed a dozen men with Swastika armlets waiting on either side of the road. Those on the left gave the Hitler salute with particular emphasis, and when I passed them without returning it, their colleagues on the right let fly with a volley of stones. I had guessed what was coming and ducked, but my open car bore plenty of scars of the encounter. I made a note of the spot for my return journey, stopped before reaching it, and put up the hood and splinter-proof windows. My friends were waiting for me right enough, but their aim was not improved by my switching on searchlights and driving straight at them with full gas.

On the outskirts of Eger I saw a group of workmen obviously guarding the entrance to a big building in which every window was shattered, even up to the third floor. It was German trade-union headquarters and workers' club, the Volkshaus. The walls had been pitted by Henleinist revolver bullets. The plucky trade-unionists greeted me with the clenched-fist salute, and told me how they had held off a two-hours' storm by the Henleinists with nothing but sticks and crudely constructed barricades. In the rough garden behind, their women lay on the grass in the sun with children playing around them.

"No matter what comes to-night", the men's leader told me, "we shall defend our headquarters to the last, even if the German army marches. We have nothing but death to expect from the Nazis anyway, and we must try to make them pay some price for our lives." What was the ultimate fate of these heroes I do not know. Probably they fled into the interior after the Munich surrender and were, perhaps, amongst the 20,000 driven back, after Britain and France, the authors of Munich, had failed to make any provision for their safety, by the embittered Czechs into the hands of the Nazis. But that night, at least, nothing happened.

For as I stood in the market-place, where every other shop seemed to have been wrecked, and watched the sullen Nazi mobs and storm-troopers triumphantly inspecting the wreckage, a long line of gendarmerie reinforcements with rifles and bayonets moved into the town across the square. It would be a libel to say that the Henleinists fled. I at any rate never saw them go. They were just not there. In the police headquarters I saw an armoury of miscellaneous weapons taken from the

Henleinists, each one neatly ticketed with the name of the delinquent. There were German army rifles, shot-guns sawn off and otherwise, an enormous collection of loaded truncheons and that very popular Nazi weapon, lengths of twisted lead piping, knives, daggers and many German automatic pistols, with a heap of the latest pattern rifle ammunition in clips. In Asch, Konrad Henlein's home, situated on a horn of the Republic projecting into Germany, which the Czechs had never intended to hold when trouble came, I found less wreckage than in other towns (for Jews, Czechs and Democrats had mostly fled weeks before) and saw Henleinist storm-troopers in full charge of the streets. Anxious to have a look at the frontier, I drove on through to Grün, opposite the little Saxon spa of Bad Elster, and as the bar across the road gently lifted at my approach, passed beneath it, intending to make some enquiries of the Czech frontier guards. As the bar softly fell behind me, to my surprise two German frontier guards in green uniforms came out and asked what I wanted. I enquired where the Czechoslovak customs officers were, and they told me in the same house as themselves.

"You are in Germany", the Czech customs officer told me, "for, as the Republic never intended to hold this area, we have no barrier of our own here. If you want to get back, you will have to handle the Germans tactfully, because they don't like journalists, especially English ones. Give us your name and paper, and if they detain you we will report to Prague and secure your release some time, but that is all we can do." With a paper to "make" as usual that evening, and that within a couple of hours, this was a poor prospect for a deportee from Germany.

When I went in to the Germans, their first question was: "What did you want with those Czechs?" I told them a tale about "Czech inefficiency", which I knew would go down well, said that I had been informed in Prague that I could cross the frontier without a triptique, and that now the customs guards told me it was not so. The senior German official was not satisfied and told me to sit down while he called up the police in Bad Elster. I spent a frightfully jolly five minutes with his colleague talking about the stupidities of the Czechs, my regrets at after all being unable to see the charms of Bad Elster, and anything else I could think of which might keep him



amused. Then his colleague came back and looked at me doubtfully.

"There's no reply from the police station", he said. "What do you want to do?"

"I suppose there is nothing I can do but return to Asch", I said, "since those idiotic Czechs won't let me through without a triptique". After a whispered conversation they told me I could go back, the bar across the road rose and fell again—this time on the right side of me—and I made hell for leather for Karlsbad to file a much-delayed story.

Driving back I saw more examples of how completely the Czechoslovak authorities had the situation in hand. But for the wreckage of the previous night's disorder, Eger looked absolutely normal. As I passed through Franzensbad, a crowd of three hundred people stood gazing at a Swastika banner on a church tower, and at this very moment a lorry-load of gendarmerie passed me going in the opposite direction. They paid no attention to the Swastika or the crowds, for they were bound for Asch. But once again I could not see those crowds go—they just weren't there. I stopped my car and rubbed my eyes and looked again. No, they were not there—and yet they had been, three hundred of them, half a minute before. The gendarmerie were not there either, only an aged Bismarckian local German policeman who had saluted the Swastika banner, saluted the Czech gendarmerie and now saluted me, just, I suppose, to show that he wanted, like Lord Runciman, to be "the friend of all and enemy of none".

Next day I revisited the same areas, and found that even in Falkenau full peace had been restored. Four gendarmerie had been killed in the neighbouring village of Habersbirk and their womenfolk badly beaten up by Henleinists. These women had been taken to Falkenau hospital, which was run by the Henleinists, together with four wounded Henleinist rebels. I went there and tactfully asked the physician in charge, Dr. Stöhr, if I could see his wounded Party friends. This request was readily granted, and although the men were really too bad to answer questions, he tried to question them for me. But when I asked to see the eight wounded gendarmes from Habersbirk and Falkenau, he became very short with me, and said he had an operation to perform and couldn't be bothered. I managed to get another doctor to let me see the women, one

of whom had a bullet wound in the stomach, and the other a broken arm, and face and hands swathed in bandages. As soon as I told the women I was a journalist, they began to try to tell me their story. "The Nazis tied me up", one said, "and dragged me through the village, kicking me as they went. That is how I got the broken arm and all these wounds in my face." Before they could say much more, the Henleinist doctor hurriedly shooed me out of the room.

I drove across to Habersbirk to see the shattered gendarmerie post. Inside lay four dead men, hardly more than boys, their gendarmerie uniforms clotted with blood. The whole place was a shambles, the walls pitted by bullets, improvised shields of the Henleinist attackers still standing outside, windows shattered and inside, drawers, desks and strong-boxes broken open and plundered. Outside stood a motor charabanc with bullet-holes through the window and blood on the floor. The relieving commandant told me how, the day before, he had telephoned from Falkenau to Habersbirk post, which consisted of a commandant and two men, and failed to get a reply. Thereupon he had driven out in the motor-bus standing outside, with ten men.

"As we turned the corner and came in view of the gendarmerie post", he said, "the mob outside opened fire, killing one man where he sat. Another was hit as he jumped out and ran for cover, dragged himself into this farmyard and died where you see the pools of blood by the dunghill. The mob scattered. Inside the gendarmerie post we found the commandant and one gendarme dead, a dead Henleinist and a wounded gendarme. The wife of one gendarme lay on the floor, shot through the stomach. Another lay bound with ropes outside the post whom the crowd had surrounded, and were kicking and spitting on when we arrived."

The places I had visited were typical for the whole area. What had happened generally was this. Before the Hitler speech, Henleinist storm-troopers had been ordered to assemble at various points and hear it together. The speech ended, they had in the big towns poured out into the streets shouting, "All men on to the streets", and had proceeded quite methodically to smash the windows of every Czech, Jewish or German-democratic shop and to beat up any political opponents encountered. In some towns the shops had been plundered, in others

the Storm-troop Commandant, after giving the order to smash the windows, had detailed off a couple of storm-troopers to prevent plundering. Everywhere there had been attempts to storm the workers' clubs and co-operatives. Almost everywhere the police had remained passive under strict orders from Prague, issued under the constant pressure from London. In smaller places like Habersbirk, particularly those on the frontier, gendarmerie posts and public buildings had been stormed and the Czech occupants murdered. In many places bombs had been thrown by the Nazis, everywhere Czech inscriptions and place-names were tarred over and the Swastika banner hoisted. In some places buildings were set alight. The village of Schwaderbach, near Graslitz, was held by storm-troopers for several days because the Czechoslovak gendarmerie were unable to fire without the risk of bullets falling in German territory. But through their field-glasses they could watch Reichsgerman storm-troopers in uniform bringing in quantities of machine-guns and hand grenades, and using them against the Czech forces of law and order. Here, as in many other places on the frontier, Czechoslovak officials, men and women, with their children, were kidnapped and carried off into Germany. And while in Munich Mr. Chamberlain and M. Daladier insisted on an amnesty for Nazi rebels legally arrested in their own country by the police of that country, they did nothing whatever to ensure the release of these hundreds of girl clerks from village post offices and simple village police kidnapped by rebels, taken into Germany and, in violation of national and international law, ill treated and shut up in regular German prisons. Thousands of German democrats and other political opponents were equally illegally kidnapped, murdered or placed in concentration camps in Germany. For them, too, nothing was done at Munich. "Peace with honour"?

On September 14th, while the Czechoslovak authorities, by a timely proclamation of martial law in a number of districts, were rapidly restoring complete order, members of the Runciman Mission hurried to Asch, pleading to be received by the "moderate and democratic" Konrad Henlein. But he had no time for them, and left them sitting on the doorstep. Next day he and K. H. Frank fled into Germany, and from the security of that country issued a revolutionary proclamation. Addressed to the Sudeten Germans, it said:

“ I appear before you ”—actually he appeared before a microphone in Leipzig—“ and declare that we want to go home to the Reich.” The Henlein Party, another Henleinist proclamation declared, “ would defend itself by all possible means ”. Throughout the day the broadcasting stations of the Reich kept up the transmission of these proclamations of rebellion.

Mr. Chamberlain left for Berchtesgaden and Lord Runciman left for London, after issuing a communiqué saying that he was “ returning for some days to London to consult with the Prime Minister in connection with the Berchtesgaden conversation ”. On arrival there he was reported to have said that the situation “ was in God’s hands ”. The members of his Mission were in those of the British Legation, whence they had wisely removed from their hotel before the terms of his report to the Cabinet had been made known.

The Czechoslovak Government issued an order for the dissolution of the Henlein Party and its storm-troopers and for legal action to be taken against Henlein, if he returned from the Reich. The German Minister, Von Eisenlohr, together with his so-called Press Attaché, Von Gregory, who had been an organiser of the Henleinists, left for Berlin, making his departure as ostentatious as possible. And Prague, with calm courage and with no trace of panic, prepared to face the approaching onslaught.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### BASTION BETRAYED

PRAGUE, I HAVE WRITTEN, PREPARED TO FACE THE approaching onslaught. Now even the man in the street began to take the prospect of war very seriously. But since the beginning of August not one day had dawned when those responsible for the country's destiny had not had to face the prospect of a sudden, murderous assault literally out of the blue—for a wonderful Indian summer had set in—in accordance with the well-known German boast that they would begin the attack when it was least expected, and would wipe out Czechoslovakia within three days. (As the fields hardened under the sun into fine tank tracks and the moon lit up every corner of Prague, we prayed for rain and mists.) So effectively did they boast that an extremely well-informed and entirely unprejudiced diplomat from Berlin visiting Prague in the summer was more than half convinced that they could do it, until I gave him a few facts and figures about the gigantic armaments and fortifications of this little country which was the armament factory of half the world. This possibility of a German *Blitzangriff* had, of course, to be reckoned with every day, but as I wrote in an article as far back as August 14th, the real explanation for the increasingly threatening attitude of Germany was that :

“ Lord Runciman, sent out by his friend Neville Chamberlain under the thin pretext that he is a private philanthropist, is rushing in where angels of peace fear to tread. The Germans calculate that he can be used to secure every concession to enable Hitler to achieve his aims of disrupting and dominating the Republic by the threat of, but without resort to, war. The electricity in the atmosphere is being artificially increased to the point where an explosion is to seem inevitable to the mediator unless he can extort a Czech surrender. Rightly or wrongly, the Czechs assume he has come to increase British pressure long exercised on Hodza to this end. They are certain that the British official view is that the Republic has got to go anyway as Hitler demands it, and that it is better that she should be quietly and expeditiously asphyxiated rather than resist an attack with the sword and thus make an unpleasant mess in Europe's drawing-room.”

The Czech civilian, solidly bourgeois, extremely methodical, did not welcome the prospect of the wrecking of his country, of the waste and untidiness of war. He was just quietly con-

scious of the justice of his cause, of his own preparedness, and determined not to surrender his hard-won liberty without a struggle. I think, too, he was a little conscious of the great rôle allotted to him. Here was this German colossus, this Fascist monster, which for five years had bullied and bluffed its way across the map of Europe, while greater so-called democracies had hesitated, shilly-shallied and yielded. But he, the Czech, was driven into a corner. He had got to fight or go right under. And he would be the first who had dared to fight; he would give a good account of himself, and if he could not save himself individually, he knew that his death was bound to help save for millions their personal liberty, so direly threatened by Fascism. No one living through this summer in Prague could fail to be conscious of something almost sublime in the attitude of the humblest person one met every day; a consciousness of high destiny was on everyone, a realisation that this country was singled out for martyrdom; a fine pride in the fact that it was Czechoslovakia which, perhaps by its own death, was going to redeem liberty in Europe. I wonder just how mirth-provoking such ideas must sound to a stout Chamberlainite. I only know that I trod very softly the pavements of Prague during these heroic weeks, with a growing foreboding that the day was coming when an Englishman in Prague would be made to feel by his Government that he was just the lowest thing on earth. I would have had no reverence for mafficking mobs, for howling, drink-inflamed jingoes. (I never saw one drunken man until after Berchtesgaden—then, dozens.) But in the face of this spirit of national immolation on the altar of a great ideal which leapt at you from taxi-driver, tram-conductor, waiter, kitchenmaid and diplomat, I spoke to every Czech with a touch of humility which was not far from reverence in those days. Few foreigners, I think, felt otherwise. I frequently caught glimpses of Lord Runciman; it was hard to believe that this man had ever smiled. Considering the task he had been set to perform, his gloomy looks at least did him credit.

So in Prague we settled down for war. I had never imagined that a whole people could face so calmly such a terrible fate as the Prager fully understood awaited them. Quietly the purchases of canned goods increased, the streets were filled with people carrying rolls of black or blue paper for the darkening of windows against air-raids, calmly the queues of those who had

not yet their gas-masks waited outside shops whose supplies were almost exhausted. Only the mothers of children for whom masks were not available sobbed and cursed bureaucratic muddling. Across the windows of one private house after another appeared the criss-crossed strips of gummed paper which in Spain had done such good service in arresting the huge pieces of whirling glass which within half a mile radius of a really good high-explosive bomb could take your head off as efficiently as the knife of a guillotine. Some housewives made quite an artistic job out of these paper-latticed windows, but by the time I made my own preparations, there was not a foot of sticky paper to be had. I made an inartistic mess with odd strips of brown paper in a house from which the cook had fled—after Munich—firmly convinced that “Hitler, Chamberlain, Daladier and Mussolini marched into Prague to-night and are slaughtering all the Czechs in the streets”. Anti-profiteering commissars were appointed to check speculation in fats. Pitiful streams of refugees began to pour in from the Sudeten areas; the men deposited their wives and children somewhere and returned to defend their homes and their anti-Fascist beliefs.

In the Sudeten districts themselves began a process which once again gave the lie to the story that the three and a half million Germans of Czechoslovakia desired annexation by the Reich. From all parts of that area declarations of loyalty to the Republic were voluntarily submitted to the authorities, many of them by local secretaries, and even in one case by a senator of the Henlein Party. The burden of these declarations was that Henlein had gone too far and acted without authority by his proclamation in favour of annexation by the Reich. Considering the situation, with a German invasion at the door, a single such declaration would have been significant, but after the martial-law proclamation had reassured the pacific Sudeten Germans that the Czechs were in earnest and would defend the Republic, they poured in in thousands. It is true that the Sudeten Germans are not the bravest of their race, as I had had reason to discover myself. One Czechoslovak Prefect from the area said to me :

“On the night of the Hitler speech, the local *Gauleiter* personally threatened me; the day after martial law was proclaimed, he rushed to offer me his humble submission and loyal services. One knows precisely what such loyalty is worth.” Such pro-



fessions were certainly not worth much to either side, but they showed at least how little real desire there was for annexation. . . . Premier Hodza gave a broadcast on the determination of the country to maintain its integrity, speaking of the "severe testing time ahead". The printer gave my report of the speech a subhead of "Severe Testing Time Abroad". I have seldom seen a more appropriate printer's "error".

For in the meantime Mr. Chamberlain, wildly applauded by London crowds and urged to "stand by Czecho", had flown to Berchtesgaden. He had taken the Hitler salute from thousands of justly enthusiastic Nazis, and he had flown back again to summon Daladier and Bonnet to London to hear the "terms" which he had arranged with Herr Hitler. These terms were nothing more or less than the full betrayal of Czechoslovakia, the surrender of all her frontier defences to Germany. They were far worse than this—they were the betrayal to Germany of the outpost of democracy on the German frontier to Fascism and the throwing open to Germany of the road to the East. During the interlude between the flight to Berchtesgaden and the announcement of the terms, Herr Hitler's radio broadcast had provided the appropriate light music. While the British Premier hobnobbed with the head of the German State, the latter's broadcasting stations had been describing the head of the Czechoslovak State as a "criminal" —"*der Verbrecher Beneš*"—and accusing him of corruption at the expense of his country, speculation and of amassing huge sums abroad in preparation for flight. The sober, quiet people among whom I was living—with whom I was living through these days of their consecration, were daily, almost hourly, described as the "Czech-Hussite-Bolshevist mob", and accused of the most fantastic atrocities against the Nazi rebels. Once again I marvelled at the Nazi technique of sheer inversion, perversion and prevarication. They had done nothing as good as this even over Austria, good as that had been.

Meantime Lord Runciman had arrived in London with his report, which was published later, on September 29th, as a justification for the Chamberlain capitulation to Hitler. The report is an amazing document, and seems to me to epitomise the character and meaning of the Mission itself. First it puts on record facts which it was impossible to slur over and which show that from the start the Henleinists, under Berlin's orders, had been determined that no solution should be reached and

had rejected every concession made. Lord Runciman says, for instance, that the "Fourth Plan" communicated to the Sudeten leaders on September 6th "embodied almost all the requirements of the Karlsbad eight points. Negotiations should at once have been resumed on this favourable and hopeful basis; but little doubt remains in my mind that the very fact that they were so favourable operated against their chances with the more extreme members of the Sudeten German Party. It is my belief that the incident at Mährisch Ostrau was used in order to provide an excuse for the suspension, if not for the breaking off, of negotiations. The Czech Government, however, at once gave way to the demands of the Sudeten German Party. I am convinced again that this did not suit the Sudeten extremists, and that incidents were provoked and instigated on September 11th, and with greater effect after Herr Hitler's speech of September 12th. As a result of the bloodshed thus caused, the Sudeten delegation refused to meet the Czech authorities, as had been arranged, on September 13th. Herr Henlein and Herr Frank presented a new series of demands which the Czechoslovak Government were again prepared to accept, on the sole condition that a representative of the Party came to Prague to discuss how order should be maintained. On the night of September 13th this condition was refused by Herr Henlein and all negotiations were completely broken off. . . .

"When I left Prague on September 16th, the riots and disturbances in the Sudeten areas, which had never been more than sporadic, had died down. A considerable number of districts had been placed under *Standrecht*, amounting to martial law. The Sudeten leaders had fled to Germany and were issuing proclamations defying the Czechoslovak Government. I have been credibly informed that at the time of my leaving, the number of killed on both sides was not more than seventy. Unless, therefore, Herr Henlein's *Freikorps* are deliberately encouraged to cross the frontier, I have no reason to expect any notable renewal of incidents and disturbances. Responsibility for the final break must rest upon Henlein and Frank, and upon those of their supporters inside and outside the country who were urging extreme and unconstitutional action."

These were the facts, which Lord Runciman had observed, and on the whole correctly observed. "Seeing therefore that the Czechoslovak Government has without the least difficulty put its own house in order with the aid of the State police and

very few troops, and seeing that the Henleinist leaders, as my report makes clear, have from the start been wasting my time by pretending to seek a remedy for minority grievances when in fact they were only preparing for a rebellion, after the failure of which they fled the country, I would like to make the following recommendations. We should thank the Czechoslovak Government for having restored order so quickly and with so little bloodshed, and for the long-suffering patience which, at our instigation, it has shown towards these subversive elements. I suggest that a Note should be sent to the German Government embodying these observations, with an intimation that we are recommending the Czechoslovak Government to maintain the precautions which it has taken, particularly the strengthening of the State police, to keep order in the Sudeten districts. Thanks to the flight of the incendiarist leaders abroad, the Czechoslovak Government has, for the first time in years, a chance of dealing directly with the Sudeten German people themselves. The opportunity is the more favourable in that the Czechoslovak Government has already dissolved the Henlein Party and the Storm-troop formations which for a long time had been in the hands of an extremist Nazi minority that was nothing more nor less than a revolutionary organisation established by Herr Hitler within the frontiers of an independent State. Now that the leading terrorists have fled, from all parts of the Sudeten territory are pouring in declarations of loyalty to the Republic (which I have not mentioned so far in my report), from members, local organisations and local leaders of the Henlein Party. They emanate from people who have been honestly seeking an improvement of the already excellent situation—as compared with that of all other minorities in Europe—of the Sudeten Germans, but who have been revolted both by the tone of Herr Hitler's speech, the criminal recklessness of the leaders in launching the rebellion, the cowardly flight of the latter and their treasonable proclamations in Germany. I believe that these people who, as the Czechoslovak authorities have evidence, are trying to form a new Sudeten German Party which will save the area from the fate which they well know came to Austria after the Anschluss, represent the solid backbone of the country, before whom the question of annexation by Germany has never been placed.

“ Although my task in Czechoslovakia has been in no sense a military one, I cannot refrain from recording that in the course

of travelling about that country I have been convinced that Czechoslovakia's system of fortifications is almost impregnable, her army of one and a half million men probably the best armed in Europe. In view of the fact that this bristling fortress lying directly in the path of Germany's route to the Balkans and Asia Minor is the only barrier between the British Empire, France and all other pacific Powers on the one hand, and Germany's hegemonistic dreams on the other, I can only recommend that the irresistible combination of Great Britain, France and Russia now takes its stand on this line. I suggest that Germany be told that this combination of Powers guarantees the granting of every reasonable demand of the Sudeten Germans which will not imperil one yard of Czechoslovakia's fortifications which are really our own, though, fortunately for us, constructed at the cost of others and manned by others who have given abundant proof of their magnificent *morale* and determination to defend their country to the last. And I suggest that Germany be warned that any further attempt on her part to violate the integrity of the Czechoslovak Republic will mean that the combination of Powers I have suggested above will defend their own most vital interests with all the tremendous force of manpower, armaments, money and reserves at their command, on the battlefield of Czechoslovakia."

I have not, of course, been able to spoof anyone with the above extract of the conclusions which Lord Runciman did not draw. Here are his actual conclusions. Deserting the realm of incontrovertible facts, Lord Runciman proceeds to give his imagination play, and one sees the results of those week-ends spent with Henleinist aristocrats, surrounded by Henleinist Party functionaries, while democratic German organisations tried in vain to pierce the iron Nazi ring surrounding Lord Runciman and get him to see things for himself.

"I have much sympathy", writes Lord Runciman, "with the Sudeten case." He says—and in this no doubt many millions of subjects of the British Empire would support him—that "it is a hard thing to be ruled by an alien race". He has been "left with the impression" that Czechoslovak rule, "though not actively oppressive and certainly not 'terroristic', has been marked by tactlessness, lack of understanding, petty intolerance and discrimination", and that as a result the Germans were "inevitably" moving towards revolt.

No word here of the fact that all instigations to revolt, the arms

and the funds to make such a thing possible, came from across the frontier—no logical conclusion drawn from the facts recorded earlier in the report that the agents of the revolt had now fled the country and order been restored. There is an astounding complaint that Czech schools had been built for those of Czech race who had—very naturally—been encouraged to settle in this part of their Republic, whom Lord Runciman calls “these Czech invaders”. “Not unnaturally”, says Lord Runciman, the Government was blamed by the Henleinists for the economic crisis. (What Government is not so blamed?) Instead of what I think are the logical conclusions, which I unsuccessfully tried to spoof you into believing he had drawn, Lord Runciman finds it “self-evident” that it is essential to give full self-determination. He “believes” cession to be inevitable, he “believes” that any plebiscite would be a “sheer formality” and without producing a shred of evidence—in contradiction, I believe, of all the available evidence—makes the absolutely wrong statement that “a very large majority of the inhabitants desire amalgamation with Germany”. He therefore “considers” that the frontier districts should at once be transferred to Germany, and that for the Germans remaining with the Republic there should be local autonomy, with a permanent seat in the Czechoslovak Cabinet for the remaining Sudeten Germans. (All these sweeping recommendations for dismembering the State are made after, as he says, his Mission had come to an end.) Far from suggesting that Britain should defend her interests here, Lord Runciman recommends the fullest possible surrender, including illegal, unconstitutional and tyrannical interference with political liberty in this sovereign State. “Those Parties and persons in Czechoslovakia”, he says, which have been pursuing a policy hostile to Germany’s interests “should be forbidden to continue their agitations, if necessary by legal measures”. He recommends the compulsory destruction of Czechoslovakia’s vital defensive alliances, even making the fantastic implication which up till then it had been reserved for the organs of Dr. Goebbels to make, that Czechoslovakia might have been guilty of an “attack” or “aggressive action arising from obligations to other States” against Germany, and says that she should be forced to give assurances against this by “re-modelling her foreign relations”. He makes, it is true, what Czechoslovakia after her experiences of the value of

treaties naturally considered to be the utterly worthless suggestion of paper guarantees for her from the Powers, and finally completes his full support of Germany's schemes by recommending a preferential commercial treaty between Germany and Czechoslovakia.

"J'aime Berlin? Mais oui, Monsieur—and how!"

No wonder that the Nazis had chanted to Lord Runciman wherever they saw him:

*"Was brauchen wir 'nen Weihnachtsmann,  
Wir haben unser'n Runciman."*

*("Now Santa Claus is an 'also ran',  
His job is done by our Runciman.")*

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It was on Wednesday, September 14th, that Mr. Chamberlain telegraphed his request to Herr Hitler for a conference, and flew the following day to Berchtesgaden with the crowds calling upon him to "stand by Czecho". It was just seven months and two days since the Führer had last entertained the head of a Government at his wonderful home in the Bavarian Alps. Did any thought of his predecessor cross the British Premier's mind? Did he make any enquiries of his genial host as to how his own colleague and predecessor at this entertainment was faring to-day in his host's cell in a Gestapo prison in Vienna? Probably not; Kurt von Schuschnigg was already *très vieux jeu*, and Mr. Chamberlain had other projects on hand than the summoning of the ghost of Banquo to this feast.

On his return, Mr. Chamberlain summoned Daladier and Bonnet to London, where they arrived on Sunday morning, and at midnight a communiqué was issued on the conclusion of the conference, announcing complete agreement on the policy "to be adopted with a view to promoting a peaceful solution of the Czechoslovak question". It was added that the two Governments hoped subsequently "to consider a more general settlement in the interests of European peace". Until the conclusion of the conference, I suppose that the vast majority of people throughout the world believed that Mr. Chamberlain had gone to Berchtesgaden to warn Herr Hitler that Britain, France and Russia were determined to maintain the integrity of Czechoslovakia and that the "peaceful solution" agreed upon was the outcome of a compromise with Herr Hitler reached on this basis. The general population in Prague certainly shared this belief,



but in official circles there had been the greatest uneasiness the moment it was known that Mr. Chamberlain was flying to Hitler—an uneasiness which an American would have expressed in the pungent phrase “We believe that Chamberlain intends to sell us down the river”. By Monday, September 19th, the outlines of the Anglo-French plan—destruction of the country’s integrity, surrender of fortifications and indispensable industrial areas to Germany without plebiscite, with a plebiscite to follow in others, abandonment of the defensive alliances and “neutralisation” of the rump Republic—had become known in Prague.

The first reaction was one of sheer incredulity. Mr. Chamberlain’s policy had always been suspect, M. Bonnet’s personal loyalty not above suspicion, but that France could have been won over, under whatever pressure, even financial, to this violation of her word, pledged in two treaties and constantly confirmed by French statesmen, seemed incredible.

Premier Hodza had publicly declared to the nation and to the world that there could be no agreement to a plebiscite in the Sudeten districts alone which would in fact decide the fate of the whole country, nor could there be any agreement which would impair the integrity of the State. President Beneš had warned Lord Runciman when the latter took his farewell that if Britain wished to run the risk of a dangerous revolution in Czechoslovakia, the best way to ensure it would be to demand further concessions impairing the authority of the State. In England the Opposition had been stormily demanding that before Mr. Chamberlain continued playing fast and loose with British interests and imposing terms on a sovereign democratic State, he should summon Parliament and allow the representatives of the nation to make their voices heard. Mr. Chamberlain declined to allow Parliament to meet until his own arrangements had been completed, when it would be given—the true dictatorial touch—“an opportunity of confirming or rejecting” the decisions which he would have already taken. On September 20th, Mr. Attlee wrote him that in the light of recent developments he regretted the refusal of his request first made a fortnight earlier for the immediate summoning of Parliament. He repeated his request (which was, of course, ignored) for the summoning of Parliament immediately in view of Mr. Chamberlain’s proposals for “the dismemberment of a sovereign State



at the dictation of the ruler of Germany " and characterised it as " a grave departure from declared British policy ".

It was all of no avail. Nor was the dignified reply of the Czechoslovak Government to the outrageous Franco-British "Berchtesgaden" proposals of avail. The Czechoslovak Government inquired in its reply whether Chamberlain and Daladier had taken into account the consequences of the country's surrendering its £80,000,000 worth of fortifications, the effect of bringing the frontiers of Germany within forty miles of Prague, the ruin and confusion which would result to Czechoslovakia from the loss of her most essential industrial areas and the severance of all her vital line of communication by the new frontiers. The Czechoslovak reply urged that the whole question should be brought before the Hague Court under the existing Czechoslovak-German Treaty of Arbitration which only the previous March General Göring, as acting head of the State, had confirmed both to Czechoslovakia and to Great Britain. Signed editorials in Czechoslovak newspapers sought to recall to London and Paris the wrong-headed brutality of what they were doing. In the *Lidove Noviny* Dr. Hubert Ripka wrote :

" It is incredible that anyone should imagine that such a surrender would preserve peace. It could at the best merely postpone the explosion. We are horrified at the blindness of the Western Powers if they really imagine that Germany is concerned about the Sudeten Germans. She is using them because she sees very rightly that if she succeeds here and breaks up Czechoslovakia, she will be master of the entire Danube basin right down to the Black Sea. She will see that the new frontiers of Czechoslovakia are made quite undefendable. What is the value of the proffered international guarantee ?

" We cannot believe that France signed unconditionally the Pact with us without realising that she might one day be called upon to fulfil it. Chamberlain himself has spoken of the necessity of maintaining the integrity of Czechoslovakia. What held good yesterday must hold good to-day. If not, why should what is signed to-day bind anyone to-morrow ? The responsibility of the two Western statesmen in themselves helping to undermine faith in the sanctity of treaties is terrible. They are summoning anarchy, which will not halt at their own frontiers and their own colonial possessions. One sees English newspapers saying that it is not possible to compel discontented Germans to live in the same State with the Czechs against their will ; it is tragic to see these papers so easily falling for German propaganda. The truth is that when the Henlein *putsch* collapsed within twenty-four hours, the long-deceived German masses began to turn back, abandoning Henleinist extremism when they saw the end to which it was leading. Those who recommend the political, military and economic break-up and ruin of the Republic, cannot understand what is at stake. It is

not a question of 'Englishmen fighting for Czechoslovakia', but of stopping Germany's imperialist expansion, which, according to Hitler's public programme, aims at the domination of all Europe."

The *Bohemia* wrote:

"When Chamberlain on returning from Berchtesgaden said that now he and Hitler each knew what was in the other's mind, everyone interpreted this to mean that force would be met with force by the Western Powers. The document now laid before us is a complete capitulation of the Western Powers to the dictators. The frontiers of Bohemia given us by nature are confirmed by our possession of them for a thousand years. This is a fact which many foreign politicians do not understand, or they would not thus casually propose to split asunder an ancient country."

It was all in vain—Britain's Premier had made up his autocratic mind. And while the German radio poured forth daily its incitements and slanders, speaking of "the bandit nation Czecho" and a stream of "cruelty propaganda" at the same time that Germany launched attack after attack across the frontiers by Henleinist Storm-troopers, stiffened with German Storm-troopers and S.S. men, the British and French Ministers in Prague were instructed to get Beneš on the run and wrench surrender from his hands.

At 2.30 a.m. in the night of September 20th to 21st I was called up by an official on the telephone and told, "Something incredible is happening. Half an hour ago the British and French Ministers arrived at the Hradschin and summoned President Beneš from his bed with peremptory orders to surrender to the Berchtesgaden dictation this very night. Chamberlain and Daladier are actually threatening us. Never in history have such humiliations been applied to the head of an independent State. They threaten to brand us as the aggressors if we do not yield. Beneš has asked for time, but even that was refused him. His surrender must be made to-night. He is calling the members of the Inner Cabinet to the Hradschin, and a full Cabinet Council will meet later during the night."

I got out my car and drove across to the Hradschin. In the inner courtyard of the vast complex of buildings which make up this ancient palace of the Kings of Bohemia were drawn up the cars of the Ministers attending the Cabinet Council. The news which came out was disquieting. "The Cabinet wants to reject and to rely on Russia and Rumania, but some of the extreme Right Agrarians threaten if Russian help is demanded

to invite Hitler to march in." Between 4 and 5 a.m. the Inner Cabinet meeting came to an end and a full Cabinet Council met, President Beneš absenting himself. At 6 a.m. came the heart-broken tidings "Czechoslovakia cannot defend herself against what is really a coalition of Chamberlain, Daladier, Hitler and Mussolini. It is surrender. The Czechoslovak Republic virtually exists no more." "But how? What was the weapon employed to destroy your fine, long-continued determination to resist?" I asked. "Surely you always expected this treachery and arranged to meet it? How did they break you at the last?"

After some hesitation came the answer: "Not only were we told categorically that if we did not surrender, France would violate her treaty and that both she and Britain would leave us to our fate when the attack began, but as a last weapon they threatened us with Poland and Hungary. We were going, they told us, to be invaded from every frontier except the little strip which we have in common with Rumania. Apparently the honour of delivering the fatal, most unkindest cut of all was reserved for our Slav brothers in Poland. And almost every hour throughout the night came the insolent enquiries of London on the telephone 'What is the meaning of this delay? Has not Beneš yielded yet?' We are beaten—utterly, completely beaten and ruined—by our friends and allies. We have but one thing left to live for—to be revenged, and for this we would be ready to-morrow to throw ourselves into the arms of Germany. But just for to-day we need the only thing left to us—our eyes to weep with."

Perhaps it seemed a more shameful thing during the day which was then dawning to be a Frenchman than an Englishman in Prague, but I found it hard to believe it. I found it difficult to look even strangers in the street in the face, when they glanced up at the sound of the English language, which for them meant "Chamberlain". As the news of the surrender became known, a nation broke into tears. You saw them literally at every corner, in every doorway, in every café, men and women, their eyes red with tears of shame and bitter rage. Outside the British Legation and at the foot of the little lane leading up to the Thun Palais in which it is housed, were posted strong forces of troops with rifles and steel helmets, far stronger than up till then had been used to guard the German Legation. They were not needed. The Czechoslovak people were in no mood for rioting, although by nightfall it

proved unwise to carry provocation so far as to speak English in the streets. A foreign correspondent has his job to do, and cannot allow personal feelings, even those of shame, to interfere, and I called on a number of officials during the morning. They received me with a rare and touching kindness, although more than one could not speak for emotion, and just pressed my hand in silent sympathy with my own shame, even in their heart-broken grief. And one, as I stood tongue-tied beside him at the window of his office, unable to find words to express what I felt, caught sight of a party of jolly little Czech soldiers moving up gaily towards the "front", unknowing what had happened, singing a melodious old Slavonic folk song as they went. Tears filled his eyes and welled involuntarily down his cheeks as he said :

"Such fine boys—such gallant, gallant boys—only asking for the chance to save our country at the cost of their own lives. Our children—ours and France's. France told us how to arm them, France built our forts, France sent her officers here to train our boys to fight her battles and ours at her side. And now France has strangled them, before they could strike a blow for all we believe in—for liberty, for democracy, for decency. And you have brought France to this."

The sun was shining gloriously outside, and through the open window came a breath of autumn perfume, of yellowing leaves, of cut stubble and newly-turned earth. It was the last straw, and this high Government official blubbered out incongruously enough, "And all in such lovely, lovely weather in our dear, dear country, too". Does it make you laugh, the spectacle of this grown man in tears about a fine autumn day? It made me press his hand and run from his room.

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As the day wore on, curses began to mingle with the tears, and a new phrase was born—"the Surrender Government". In the great square which is the heart of Prague, the Václavské Náměstí, the "Square of Good King Wenceslaus", a series of spontaneous patriotic demonstrations began, little bunches of men and women gathering outside hotels and cafés to listen to impromptu speeches wherein the disappearance of the Government which, under whatever pressure, had signed away the nation's birthright, was demanded. Each demonstration con-

cluded with the singing of the National Anthem, and the strong bodies of police on duty stood themselves at the salute; here and there I saw isolated policemen with tears in their eyes as they listened to the speeches. "The Government cannot bind the nation to this—it is unconstitutional," speakers declared. "No one but Parliament can upset the whole Constitution like this, and partition the country which is the birthright of all. Beneš was not at the fatal Cabinet Council. The President has yet to speak. Away with the Agrarian reactionaries who have betrayed us!"

Towards evening the whole city seemed to be pressed into the Václavské Náměstí, which from above looked as though one could have walked on the heads of the dense crowds. Processions formed up carrying the national colours, shouting "Away with the Government!" "Long live the Army!" "Military Dictatorship!" "We want Syrový!". General Syrový, the Commander-in-chief, was almost a legendary figure, a man who had fought his way through from Siberia at the head of the Czechoslovak Legion after the war and had had the good fortune to become labelled as a national hero through the loss of an eye. What was afoot was not a revolution so much as a national re-birth. With the sole exception of the Fascists and Right-wing Agrarians, the whole nation from Right to Left seemed to find in Syrový the symbol of patriotism and national defence. Nobody doubted that the military dictatorship would be used in the defence of democracy and against Fascism.

At last the great square began to empty. Singing the National Anthem and headed by the colours of the Republic, two hundred and fifty thousand men and women moved in orderly self-discipline through the narrow streets leading down to the river, and over the Charles Bridge, the most beautiful, perhaps, of any in Europe, with its double row of baroque saints on either parapet. They wound through the ancient streets of the Mala Strana, the "Little Side", of old Prague, and so up and up to the Hradschin on the hill. A force of police which tried to bar the way was surrounded by singing, cheering patriots and swept half-willingly along with the crowd, which before the residence of their President halted and called on him to "Dismiss the capitulators and put the Army in charge". Only as dawn had begun to tinge with mauve the steep Gothic roofs of the darkened Palace did the great demonstration finally

disperse, only to be renewed in still more impressive form before Parliament a couple of hours later.

Meantime a hundred thousand copies of a leaflet had been circulated calling upon Beneš to use his authority "against the enemies without our ranks. We know," it said, "that you stand firm still—as firm as our Army does. Behind you is the whole nation, which has not capitulated. The die is not yet cast, and the Government is not the nation.

"We have not lost a single rifle, a single gun, a single aeroplane or a single fort. We have gained enormous strength in the resolution now taken by the nation never to yield to the Nazis. Away with the Capitulation Ministers, the friends of the Nazis. Let us show the world our determination to defend ourselves, and the democrats of the whole world will stand by those who fight for truth, for honour and their rights. Parliament alone has the right to decide the fate of the Republic. And Parliament will refuse the shameful surrender.

"Long live the Czechoslovak Republic, its splendidly loyal army and the army's commander and founder, Edouard Beneš! Firm stands the President! Firm stands the Army! Firm stands the nation! Let us raise our voices and sweep away the traitors!"

And from Godesberg, where the Union Jack consorted shamefully with the Swastika banner of terror to welcome "the two leaders, Adolf Hitler and Neville Chamberlain", as the German radio expressed it, came the news that Herr Hitler on the following day would tell Mr. Chamberlain that Germany was going to march into Czechoslovakia despite the Government's acceptance of the terms which Hitler had demanded only a week before. As in dozens of cases throughout the whole history of Nazism, concession had merely whetted the appetite for fresh demands.

The morning of the 22nd dawned with a general strike against the capitulation. Headed by the flag of the Republic, the workers formed up in disciplined columns at the factories and marched to the square before Parliament, where soon one-third of the population of the city was gathered. There had been no such scenes since the foundation of the Republic, and when at 10 a.m. deputies of all Parties except the Agrarians appeared on the balcony, and the loud-speakers proclaimed that the Hodza Government had resigned, to be succeeded by a Government of

National Defence with a strong military tinge headed by General Syrový, the scenes of rejoicing were indescribable. The nightmare of endless concessions and new demands which had begun with the arrival of the Runciman Mission had passed away. Enthusiasm reached its highest pitch when General Obratilek read to the cheering masses a declaration by General Syrový.

"I guarantee", it ran, "that the Army stands and will stand on our frontiers to defend our liberty to the last. I may soon call upon you here to take an active part in the defence of our country in which we all long to join."

The vast crowds dispersed, and in the afternoon everyone returned to work. Now the nation was at one, the country would be defended, and now everyone could throw himself whole-heartedly into the last preparations to meet the inevitable onslaught of a mighty enemy. As people dispersed from the Parliament Square, some ran happily to buy their gas-masks, others to get air-raid paper, some to paste protective strips on their window-panes and others to dig shelter-trenches in the parks. Meantime, the news of the terms dictated by Britain and France had had its natural effect in the Sudeten Provinces. A new Henleinist rising had started the preceding day, and Czechs and German democrats had been kidnapped wholesale by the Nazis and carried off into Germany. Police and gendarmerie had applied to Prague for instructions as to whether they could use their full force against the rebels who were storming public buildings. The Ministry of the Interior had always been the weak spot in the Government, owing to the prevalence of the reactionary influence of the Extreme Right Agrarians, some of whom were not far from Fascism. No instructions were issued, and in many cases Henleinists gained temporary control of the towns. The Fifth Column had got to work.

With the formation of the Syrový Government, all this came to an end. The necessary orders were given, and within a few hours the Henleinists had been forced to surrender control, in most cases without bloodshed, merely by the dispatch of a small detachment of troops whose commander gave a couple of hours for all public buildings to be evacuated and Swastika banners to disappear. Now no attempt was made to reoccupy Asch and a few other places projecting into Germany which were outside the defence line. The military frontiers had become also the political frontiers of a nation at bay. In a



moving appeal to the nation President Beneš pledged that there should be no surrender. "If it is necessary to fight", he said, "we shall do so to our last breath. If we have to negotiate, we shall do so. But our beloved Czechoslovakia shall not perish." The crowds in the street cheered the loud-speakers transmitting the speech as though the President himself had been before them.

And in Godesberg, Herr Hitler and Mr. Chamberlain beamed with smiles at one another as they met, and the German dictator took both hands of his British colleague in his own and shook them warmly—a privilege, we are told, which Hitler reserves for his most intimate friends. Mr. Chamberlain sat down to a true German lunch, in which Rhine pike, Rhine wine, Sauerkraut and German champagne played their part, while Herr Hitler consulted with all the military commanders and the worst extremists of his Party whom he had brought with him—Ribbentrop, Goebbels, Himmler, head of the S.S. Guards and the secret police, and Dietrich, the Reich Press Chief.

The new German demands were handed over—immediate evacuation of the Sudeten areas and a German occupation—in default, invasion, to begin on Saturday, October 1st. The German occupation was to extend both to the territories demanded for annexation outright and to those in which it had been agreed to go through the motions of a plebiscite. Nothing was to be removed from the areas to be occupied—not even military materials—and no fortifications were to be destroyed. These were terms of a capitulation so complete that there is no recorded instance in history of any such demands having even been suggested, save at the conclusion of a victorious war. Mr. Chamberlain undertook to convey these terms without comment to the Czechoslovak Government and flew back to London.

The most interesting question of the whole Czechoslovak story is one which cannot yet be solved—on what understanding did Mr. Chamberlain really part from Herr Hitler in Godesberg? After his return to London came the ostentatious British preparations for war which caused the whole nation to believe that at any moment the German bombers might have been over London. When tension had become extreme, there came that remarkable scene in the House with the dramatic "arrival" of a telegram from Hitler agreeing to meet Chamberlain again in the Four-Power

Conference at Munich. Mr. Chamberlain told the cheering crowds as he left the House that "it will be all right this time".

How did Mr. Chamberlain know?

He had previously said in a broadcast that "I would not hesitate to pay even a third visit to Germany if I thought it would do any good".

When, the Czechs began to ask themselves, did this idea of a third visit originate? Was it perhaps already considered even at Godesberg? Did Mr. Chamberlain tell the Führer that he could not get the British people to swallow these Godesberg demands without preparation, without a little shadow-fencing, without summoning all the blackest clouds of a world war which, in the joy of their dispersal by a third visit to Germany, would enable him with the halo of an angel of peace above his head to put across the essence of Godesberg undetected by the masses?

"Did Chamberlain", a Czech editor asked me bitterly, "perhaps remind Herr Hitler of how a certain 'Red Letter' had once brought an eleventh-hour electoral victory to the Conservative Party? Did he remind him how the first National Government had been enabled to turn out with ignominy the British Socialist Government by raising the alarm that they were 'going off gold', and thus themselves 'go off gold' with impunity ten days later? And did Herr Hitler chuckle and turn the pages of his own book of reminiscences to remind Mr. Chamberlain how the German people had been induced five years before to destroy their own liberties by the story, which the subsequent trial had completely disproved, that Communists had set fire to the German Reichstag?"

To all these questions I could, of course, return him no documented answer. The people who could, I imagine, are few indeed.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### “ AUX ARMES, CITOYENS ! ”

AT 6.15 P.M. ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 23RD, THE BRITISH AND French Ministers, Mr. Basil Newton and M. de la Croix, called upon Dr. Beneš with a message from their respective Governments. For once it was not a demand for further yielding to Germany. They conveyed the substance of the Godesberg demands, but without the usual insistence that there must be compliance at once, if not sooner. On this occasion there was not even advice to accept. The two Ministers told the President that their respective Governments could no longer take the responsibility of advising Czechoslovakia to remain passive, or of recommending that the country should not make every preparation for her own defence, including the issue of a general order of mobilisation. This mobilisation had long been urgently necessary, but under warnings which were not far short of threats from London, supported by Paris, Czechoslovakia had been obliged to refrain from carrying it through. Now the ban on the little country's preparations for its own self-defence was lifted. The British Government subsequently denied that they had given advice and approval in this matter; they had merely refused to continue the responsibility of advising against the step, but had issued a warning that it might precipitate action by Germany. One thing is clear; if a war scare in London was desirable, nothing could make it more pungent than Czechoslovakia's mobilisation. Released at last from leading-strings, although afforded no atom of support either from the great Power who was her ally or from the one she had believed to be her friend, Czechoslovakia's action was immediate. Beneš promptly summoned a Cabinet Council, which met at 8 p.m. and instant mobilisation was decided on.

Crossing the Václavské Náměstí on the way back to my office at 10.30 p.m., I noticed a dozen big military cars tearing down the street at a high speed, hooting loudly. Ten minutes later the order for general mobilisation was broadcast from all radio stations

in the five languages of the Republic. Hardly had the first announcement been completed with its call to all reservists to make their way immediately by the shortest route to their depots than the process was at work before my eyes. The reservists did not merely obey a summons. They leapt to arms with an indescribable enthusiasm to face the onslaught of the mighty adversary. Theatres and cinemas broke off their performances, and from these, the cafés, the restaurants and private houses, the happy warriors poured into the streets. The tram conductors asked all non-reservists to leave the trams and the men called to the colours crowded in, clinging to every available inch of space, including the footboards, in their eagerness to obey the summons. Police disappeared immediately to join up, and the cheering crowds policed themselves, keeping the roadway clear for the clanging trams and hooting motor vehicles which tore through the streets with their precious burden of defenders. Soon appeared civilians unfit for service with green “ C.P.O.”—Air-Raid Defence—armlets to replace the police. There was tremendous speed, tremendous bustle, but not the slightest confusion. All taxi-cabs and the majority of private cars on the streets were commandeered, and within ten minutes there was not a taxi to be had in Prague, either that night or for the ensuing week. Citizens in the suburbs got out their cars and drove around the town, cruising in search of recruits in need of a lift. Reservists who failed to secure a vehicle marched in little bodies through the streets, and as if by magic national flags appeared and were carried at their head, generally by women.

In the restaurant of the Hotel Esplanade two of the Henleinist leaders, Kundt and Neuwirth, were sitting at their dinner. The head waiter addressed a word to the waiter who was bringing them the next course. The latter put down his tray on the nearest table and ran for the door, with coat-tails flying behind him. Angrily the Henleinist leaders demanded, “ Has the waiter gone mad, running out into the street like that ? ”

“ Your waiter ”, they were told, “ has gone to join the colours—general mobilisation.” The two leaders’ faces grew still paler as five minutes later a man in civilian clothes walked up to an adjoining table and said to the man sitting there, “ You are Captain Von Blank, of the German air force and must come with me. You are charged with espionage.” Shortly afterwards the two leaders themselves were placed under arrest.

All telephone communication with the outside world was immediately severed, and I could send no news. The severance, militarily justified for four days, was maintained for weeks. I went out on to the Václavské Náměstí and watched for some twenty minutes the scenes of orderly speed and enthusiasm.

Suddenly every street-light in the city went out without warning. The crowds on the street quietly dispersed and went home in search of their gas-masks. Air-raid patrols shouted warnings wherever a window showed a chink of light. As if by magic, military patrols appeared on the streets with pots of blue paint, stopped every car and expeditiously blued over headlights and tail-lights. The next few hours until dawn were anxious ones, for nothing seemed more likely than that the Germans, as was known their General Staff had long planned, would immediately plaster with bombs the city of Prague and all railway junctions in order to paralyse mobilisation. Prague lies in a deep hollow, where the mists hang heavy during a good portion of the year—"an ideal city to gas", as a military attaché had remarked to me that morning. But there was no sign of panic or of alarm. Mobilisation continued in the pitch darkness, and soon the stations were crowded with men in brand-new uniforms, eager to get forward to the front. And up at the front itself, with lightning-like rapidity, the necessary defence precautions were taken. The long-prepared mines beneath bridges, roads and railway junctions leading into Germany were touched off, felled trees and "knife rests" barred every road and within an hour all connections between the two countries were cut. Within four hours mobilisation had been completed and the first reinforcements were moving in to the fortifications.

The war equipment of the infantry, which happens to be within my personal knowledge, may perhaps furnish some indication of Czechoslovakia's preparedness. Apart from ammunition reserves each man of those who moved forward into line that night carried on him 180 rounds of rifle ammunition and four hand-grenades, every squad of six men a light machine gun with eighty magazines each containing twenty rounds. Later I spoke to more than one officer who had had the painful duty of handing over the national defences to the Germans when the betrayal of Munich had been completed. To them the German officers all expressed amazement at the armament of the Czech troops and the terrific strength of the fortification system. "How could you

ever bring yourselves to give up all this without a struggle?” was the usual Reichswehr comment, and the usual Czechoslovak reply, “You can thank our friends and allies, not any fear of yourselves, for your triumph to-day”.

In my office we sat through the night in darkness, for that very afternoon our air-raid paper had been taken away to be fitted into frames, and there was no transport available to reach the suburbs. At the first streak of dawn we felt our way home.

The German tactics puzzled me. Why had the long-planned raids never taken place? What interest could Germany have in allowing this country to mobilise and close the iron ring around her frontiers? There was something very frightening about it—far more frightening than the worst air raid itself could have been. Had Germany got some guarantee that she would be enabled to conquer without war? There seemed no other explanation of her astounding passivity.

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There was, as my friend of the Runciman Mission had put it, something barbaric about the Czechs; they really were not afraid to face tremendous odds in the defence of their own liberties. This was perhaps because they had real liberties left to fight for. The Republic of Masaryk and Beneš was a real democracy, and every individual knew quite clearly for what he was going to stake his life. I came across very few signs in these days of patriotism propaganda, of any efforts to work up enthusiasm, of appeals to false sentiment. These people had had in the course of past centuries to face German menaces before. And there was amazing political unity cutting through all political party barriers. In what pluto-democracy would you find even the Communists joining in a demand for a military dictatorship under which their own liberty to make political propaganda would be the first to suffer? Can you imagine the British branch of the Bata Shoe Company supporting the completely boycotted Communist *Daily Worker* by taking valuable advertising space in it as the Bata Concern did in these days in the Prague *Rote Fahne*? Where else, I wonder, could one have seen, as I saw in Prague outside Parliament on the day when the Hodza Government fell, the spectacle of a Socialist deputy stepping forth and demanding a hearing for a deputy of the Conservative (Agrarian) Party which had just been overthrown by popular demonstrations and a general strike, when 250,000 people were booing as one man to prevent his

voice being raised? "Let the deputy Riparek speak, although he is an Agrarian", the Socialist had said. "He is a peasant and a Slovak, and to-day peasants, bourgeois and workers must stand together in the defence of the Republic which belongs to all of us."

At all events, it was quite impossible for the Czechoslovak people to disguise their happiness in the days which followed mobilisation. Now at every hour of every day and every night aeroplanes, gliding soundlessly from a height at which they were invisible, might convey the first news of the outbreak of war with the roar of the first high-explosive bomb. And yet the people were happy, happier than they have ever been since October 1st brought the news that there would be no war, happier than they will be in their humiliation, their virtual loss of independence and utter subjugation to Germany for many years to come. All sorts of minor war-time inconveniences came upon us at once. Food prices began to rise, petrol was unobtainable, queues of those yet unprovided with gas-masks formed up and waited long hours to be supplied. Ordinary telephonic and telegraphic communication abroad ceased abruptly, the trains were reserved almost entirely for the military. As the supply columns plodded their way up to the front, the streams of refugees poured into the interior in the opposite direction. And with dusk night after night the city was plunged into abysmal darkness. With pocket-lamps blued and dimmed to pinpoints of light, worthless except as a warning to motor-cars with their dimmed headlights, one felt one's way through the pitch-dark streets from the office to the censor, waited long for him to cope with the message in a foreign language, for the overworked telegraph clerks accustomed to dealing with seven-word telegrams and now compelled to tackle messages running into thousands of words—which usually arrived the following afternoon, far too late for publication—and felt one's way back again. Down on the frontier Germany was launching constant raiding parties who ambushed and murdered isolated Czechoslovaks. On the pavements of the Inner City appeared broad arrows pointing the way to the nearest air-raid shelter, and everywhere were placards giving the address of the nearest first-aid station. Not a policeman was to be seen. On point duty were elderly civilians wearing the Sokol cap, boys of fifteen, their faces barely discernible beneath extinguisher steel helmets, and soldiers in the uniforms of France, Italy and another Power which had ceased to exist twenty years before—



Czarist Russia. These were the Czechoslovak Legionaries wearing the uniforms in which they had fought in the last war. Air-raid police in civilian clothes or semi-uniforms, men unfit for military service, patrolled the suburbs with rifles and a pouchful of live rounds, for many well-to-do people had closed up their houses to withdraw to Slovakia, and there was to be short shrift for eventual plunderers. Most people walked the streets with grey gas-mask canisters slung from their shoulders; children carried them to and from school. (Girls found that they easily held powder-puff and lipstick beside the mask.) Shoals of letters, postcards and telegrams had poured in to the offices of Prague newspapers with the general burden “Czechoslovakia, hold fast! The people of Britain are with you!” Englishmen no longer felt ashamed to speak their own language in the streets.

By now most of the motor-cars were flying some kind of pennant—the majority just the Czechoslovak colours. The morning after Godesberg a Czechoslovak diplomat asked me: “Haven’t you got a little Union Jack for your car? You could fly it now without shame.”

“Better wait a little”, I told him. “There is something fishy going on still. Haven’t you noticed that the only concrete objection raised by Chamberlain to Hitler’s plans against this country is an objection to an *immediate* assault with arms? That seems to me to leave the way open to give Hitler all the fruits of war without compelling him to fight. When I hear that Britain, France and Russia take their stand for the integrity of Czechoslovakia’s line of fortifications, I will run up the Union Jack if you like. I hope I may be able to soon. But not yet.”

Then came the second speech of Hitler. At Nuremberg he had said that he would not tolerate a second time the “insult” of Czechoslovak mobilisation. Well, we had mobilised again. Presumably we should be for the high jump to-night. The mobilisation had gone through inexplicably, without any effort to prevent it, but to-night surely the first bombs would accompany or follow the speech. After all, Prague had asked for it, and now there was nothing to do but to take the punishment which was coming and hit back hard across the frontier. . . . My office wired me that all correspondents had been withdrawn from Berlin, and that I was to leave whenever I thought fit. Leave Prague, where after five years’ of successive retreats, democracy was at last to stand fast against the Fascists, and even now was

awaiting with bowed head and clenched fists the fury of the first onslaught? Desert these people who, alone in Europe, had for the second time in six months found the courage to defy the Dictator before whose threats the Governments of Great Powers quailed? It was unthinkable. I drove out an angrily protesting wife to comparative safety—and as it proved later, to endless discomforts and privations—in Slovakia. I released and sent off within a few hours of the mobilisation a colleague who had just been sent out to lend a hand on a political crisis story and who, I felt, was in no way called upon to face what lay ahead for us who lived here. I fought—and lost—a two-day battle with a secretary who had also no business in the war zone. She, too, had glimpsed the sublime courage of this little people of whose language neither of us could speak a hundred words, and refused to go, pleading unconvincingly economic reasons. So she bought her gas-mask and I puttied up the bathroom windows to construct a gasproof chamber for Monkey Face, my *Schnauzer* terrier, who had no mask. Mephistopheles, the *Dachshund*, was as safe as a dog could be in the threatened Republic, with my wife.

It was on the night when the announcement of the Munich Conference came through that my half-witted cook decamped.

“Our enemies, Hitler, Mussolini, Chamberlain and Daladier,” she said, “are marching into Prague to-night and slaughtering the Czechs in the street. I heard it on the wireless and I want to go off to stand by my brother.” I could not persuade her that at least in the streets of Prague, and that night, the Czechs were not being slaughtered, and that Munich, where the slaughter-bench was, was far away.

“I thought better of you, *Pan Gedye*,” she said reproachfully. “You bought me that lovely gas-mask and now you lie to spare my feelings. But I know the truth, because I heard it on your own wireless.”

So I told her to venture forth with her ready-packed suitcase into the blood-soaked streets of Prague at her own risk, dug out some scraps of cold food and got on with the *Schnauzer*'s gas-proof chamber and strip-teasing windows against the effects of high explosive blasts. Drawing-pins and scrolls of black paper soon gave one room the necessary funereal gloom. Two days later the cook returned, only to disappear twice more on the basis of similar exclusive information of her own, so I camped

out in my one blacked-out room until a Sudeten German refugee came to the rescue. In the panic after the collapse, Czech police ran her to earth and expelled her back to the Nazis, together with her decrepit Pomeranian. Poor Paula Schmidt!—sweet, fair and sixty and never been kissed—nor forced to cook, scrub and polish until she fled from the Nazis. She at least cannot have been sent to Dachau for her vague democratic feelings—or was she? One laughs—but there are no limits to this horror, and once within the frontiers of barbarism, one laughs no more.

My office charwoman asked if she could come back to the office on the evening of Hitler's speech and listen to the broadcast with us. “It may be war to-night,” she said, “and if so I may as well know how it comes.” Those “Czechety-Czechs”, as we had christened them familiarly! You just could not get them to panic. The charwoman “only wanted to know”! But she turned up complete with gas-mask and blued pocket-lamp. That, too, was typical—no panic, but everything prepared.

Half an hour before the speech began instructions were broadcast as to what to do in the event of an air-raid. A “state of emergency” had been proclaimed that day throughout the Sudeten area, partly on account of Henleinist rioting during the week, and partly in readiness for anything which might come. Göring had already produced a sufficiently violent speech—which incidentally no newspaper printed in the English language could have published verbatim without having to face a charge of obscenity over one phrase—to ensure that Hitler's language would have to be pretty fiery to avoid an anticlimax. Göring had called the Czechs “these ridiculous dwarfs” and “the splinter of a people without culture—no one knows where they came from”. (Was it Göring who inspired Mr. Chamberlain to cry so plaintively a few days later that it was dreadful to be digging trenches because of a far-away country and a quarrel of which they knew nothing? At any rate both speeches contained noteworthy professions of ignorance by leading statesmen.) But General Göring felt himself on safe ground. A fortnight before he had told M. Francois-Poncet in Berlin that he had positive assurances from England that in a conflict over Czechoslovakia she would stand aside.

Hitler found no difficulty in surpassing Göring in insults and abuse. Never in history had such vulgar personal insults been

screamed out by the head of one State to the head of another. It was a pitiable exhibition of personal hatred and complete lack of self-control. "The existence of Czechoslovakia is based on a lie, and the father of that lie is Beneš", he screeched. "When Beneš' lies had created this State he began a rule of terror. He was determined to exterminate the Germans. And up to a point he has succeeded." In a frenzy of self-intoxication the Führer screamed out things which even his unthinking hearers cannot all have believed. He spoke of "hundreds of thousands driven out, tens of thousands put in prison and thousands mown down", and declared "The good world's democrats do not lift a finger". I thought of the patient, worried and long-suffering Czech police, whom for weeks I had watched in the Sudeten areas being made the butt of the insolence and threats of the Sudeten Nazi terrorists, and could have smiled but for the thought of this man's power to delude millions with sheer perversion of the truth. Again and again in his speech King Charles' Head got into the way of his argument. The tyrant Dr. Beneš' answer was "to shoot, arrest and imprison everyone who displeased him". (One almost felt inclined to look for Dachau on the map of Czechoslovakia.) "Dr. Beneš answered with new murders, new imprisonments, new arrests. He invented the insolent lie that Germany had mobilised."

Out of all this raving rhetoric emerged two clear statements.

England and France, said Hitler, had decided no longer to support Czechoslovakia.

Secondly, unless the Sudeten areas were ceded to him by Saturday—four days ahead—he would march that day and seize them. "Beneš", he screamed insultingly, "has never kept his word in his life. Now he is going to be made to keep it. I have made Beneš an offer. It is nothing more than the realisation of what he has promised already. The decision between peace and war is in his hands. Let Beneš chose. . . ."

"So we have four days to live", said my charwoman quietly as the speech came to an end. "We had better make the most of them. At least Prague will not be bombed to-night after all, and that is something."

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### SECOND BETRAYAL

FOUR DAYS TO LIVE. AND ON FRIDAY, AT MIDNIGHT—  
Prague looked at London, awaiting a sign. The first of our four days brought good signs. Duff Cooper had at last secured mobilisation of the Fleet. The Naval Reserve was called up. Mr. Chamberlain, remarking mildly that “I must say that I find Herr Hitler’s attitude unreasonable”, declared that “If I were convinced that any nation had made up its mind to dominate the world by fear of its force, I should feel it should be resisted”. That seemed all right, despite the “if”—there was sure to be someone in London who would buy him in time a copy of *Mein Kampf*. The Queen told the nation from the King to “keep cool heads and brave hearts”. The King had declared a state of emergency and called up anti-aircraft and coast-defence territorial units. London also was digging its air-raid trenches and drawing gas-masks. Now, at long last, there was a real hope of peace. The democratic front against Fascist tyranny was forming, England meant business and Hitler’s bluff would be called—or he would see it through, and after weeks or months of agony, freedom would dawn again in Europe.

And then, on Wednesday night, came confusion. Chamberlain had made a bewildering speech. He had begun by declaring that in July the Government had at once rejected one of the three alternatives he posed—that of warning Germany that if she attacked Czechoslovakia she would have to face war with Britain. He had not told the House that what Germany threatened was just what he had said should be resisted—“to dominate the world by fear of its force”—but had adopted *en bloc* the German thesis and thus misrepresented the whole issue. Even the most superficial newspaper reader or radio listener knew that the insignificant and exaggerated grievances of the German minority in Czechoslovakia were merely being used as an excuse to attain Germany’s real objectives. They knew that these were the destruction of Czechoslovakia as a bastion

against German domination of Europe, the weakening of France and Britain through the loss of the million and a half soldiers of the Czechoslovak army, the cutting of the vital link in the Franco-Russian defensive pact and the substitution for the democratic Republic of a regime of reaction which would make of Czechoslovakia another German puppet State. But Mr. Chamberlain declared that the British people would not have followed the Government into war "to prevent a minority from obtaining autonomy or choosing to pass under some other Government". He had even ventured to assert, with superb audacity, that Lord Runciman in Czechoslovakia had gained the confidence of "both" sides!

One unpleasant shock to Czech public opinion for which Mr. Chamberlain could in no way be blamed, was given by the revelation that the Syrový Government, put in to reverse the unconstitutional surrender of territory to which the Hodza Government had agreed, had confirmed that surrender. Furthermore, Mr. Chamberlain revealed that the Führer had told him in Godesberg that he himself at the time of Berchtesgaden had never even believed that Mr. Chamberlain could obtain the consent of the British Government to the surrender he had demanded. Mr. Chamberlain told the House how deeply impressed he was by Herr Hitler's "rooted distrust and disbelief in the sincerity of the Czech Government"; the head of the British Government repeated this slander without reproof or denial. He had written, said Mr. Chamberlain, to Herr Hitler in reference to those Godesberg demands which he himself had recognised that the Czechoslovak Government could not be asked to accept and of which he had refused to recommend acceptance, that "I feel certain that you can get all essentials without war and without delay".

At last the Czechs saw where they stood. There was no intention on Mr. Chamberlain's part of refusing a single demand of Herr Hitler—it was merely felt that it was unnecessary for him to draw the sword and make an unpleasant mess with the body of Czechoslovakia on the European carpet when the Governments of Britain and France were quite ready to achieve the same result just as expeditiously but much more cleanly with a bludgeon. Then came the scene—a dramatic scene indeed—of the amazingly well-timed handing to Mr. Chamberlain by Sir John Simon of Herr Hitler's agreement to the proposal

for the Four-Power Conference. The Czechs again recalled that well-timed Reichstag fire of 1933.

“ We were badly spoofed over Munich ”, a colleague on an anti-Chamberlainite newspaper told me. “ But when Sammy Hoare, as my proprietor has just told me happened to him, or Halifax rings up the owners of even the most hostile newspapers and bluffs them into keeping silence about Chamberlain’s games with hints that otherwise they may be branded as responsible for a world war, what can be done? ”

In Prague, the announcement that a third visit to Hitler would be paid by Chamberlain, and that it would take the ominous shape of a Four-Power Conference arranged by Mussolini, re-awakened all previous suspicions of Mr. Chamberlain’s policy, which were only partly concealed by an attitude of extreme reserve in official circles. The tumultuous applause of the House of Commons, the plaudits of the London crowds, the insane “ victory demonstrations ” in Paris, found not one single echo in Prague. Distrust, foreboding and alarm were universal. What few seemed to suspect in London was immediately apparent in Prague. The final betrayal of Czechoslovakia was at hand. The hour had come when Godesberg, dramatically rejected at first, could now be put across without the British and French people realising just what was afoot. The British Premier’s speech was scanned in vain for any indication to the House of how Hitler’s map would entirely destroy the political, financial and economic independence of this solid Republic, leaving in its place something which would be no State, but a sort of native reserve in Central Europe where the remnants of the Czech people would be able to eke out some kind of existence by the grace of the German Dictator so long as they showed complete subservience to him. No hint was given in the speech as to how Hitler’s map to which Mr. Chamberlain alluded had been cunningly devised so as to take from the Czechs every possible strategic position of defence, the basis of the country’s economic existence, its most vital communications. There was no word of reproach for all the vile insults which Hitler, the German Press and radio had hurled at the head of the Czechs’ beloved President. Standing with unexampled courage between life and death, due to come to them at midnight in two days’ time, the Czechs looked in vain for a word of appreciation of the fact that national honour compelled them to choose that rather than



a shameful mutilation without striking a blow in their own defence. The only official comment I could extract for publication came from between tight-set lips. "Say, if you like, that we hope Chamberlain may preserve peace—but at a price compatible with our honour and our continued independent existence."

On Friday came the news of the peace—and of the price at which it had been preserved. The character of this peace was foreshadowed by the whole procedure. To this conference which was to decide the fate of Czechoslovakia, Czechoslovakia was not admitted. While the four Premiers drew up their final maps, cut up Czechoslovakia's territory, destroyed her fortifications, seized her industries, retired her undefeated army, M. Mastny and the other Czech delegates were allowed to sit outside in the hall—but not to enter the conference room. Vainly, on the urgent instructions of Prague, did they try to speak at least with the British and French delegations before everything was irrevocably settled. They were not admitted; "native States" are given orders, not consulted. Finally, when the dictates of the four Great Powers were curtly handed to M. Mastny by the British and French delegations who summoned him for the purpose, the Czech representative asked to be allowed to make a few observations on what was being done to his country. He was told that the British and French delegations did not desire to hear them. No answer or comment was required from Czechoslovakia, they said, but very prompt compliance. Dr. Hubert Masařik of the Czechoslovak Foreign Office, who accompanied Dr. Mastny, relates in his official report how when they reached Munich by air to attend the Conference, they found the latter already in session before even the arrival of the Czechs, and how they were left kicking their heels from 4.20 until 7 without being able to see anyone from either the French or British mission.

"At 7 p.m. I had the first conversation with Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin. He was nervous and very reserved. From his very reluctant indications I gathered that a plan, the details of which Mr. Gwatkin could not then give me, was already completed in its main outlines and that it was much harsher than the Franco-British proposals. . . . I called Mr. Gwatkin's attention to the consequences of such a plan from the internal political, economic and financial aspect. He returned that I seemed to ignore how difficult was the situation of the Great Powers, and that I could not understand how hard it had been to negotiate with Hitler.

"At 10 p.m. Mr. Gwatkin brought Dr. Mastny and myself to Sir Horace Wilson. In accordance with Mr. Chamberlain's wish, Sir Horace told us in the presence of Mr. Gwatkin the main lines of the new plan, and handed us a map on which were marked the areas which were to be occupied at once. To my objections he replied twice with absolute formality that he had nothing to add to his statements. He paid no attention whatever to what we said concerning places and areas of the greatest importance to us. Finally he returned to the conference and we remained alone with Mr. Gwatkin. We did what we could to convince him of the necessity of revising the plan. His most important reply was that the English delegation favoured the German plan. Mr. Gwatkin answered, 'If you do not accept, you will have to settle your affairs with the Germans absolutely alone. Perhaps the French may tell you this more gently, but you can believe me that they share our views. They are disinterested.'

"At 1.30 a.m. we were taken into the hall where the conference had been held. There were present Mr. Neville Chamberlain, M. Daladier, Sir Horace Wilson, M. Léger, Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin, Dr. Mastny and myself. The atmosphere was oppressive; sentence was about to be passed. The French, obviously nervous, seemed anxious to preserve French prestige before the court. Mr. Chamberlain, in a long introductory speech, referred to the Agreement and gave the text to Dr. Mastny to read out. . . . Minister Mastny asked Mr. Chamberlain whether the Czechoslovak member of the Commission would have the same right to vote as the other members, to which Mr. Chamberlain agreed. In answer to the question whether international troops or British forces would be sent to the plebiscite areas, we were told that that was under consideration. . . . Mr. Chamberlain was yawning continuously, without making any attempt to conceal his yawns. I asked MM. Daladier and Léger whether they expected a declaration or answer of our Government to the Agreement. M. Daladier was noticeably nervous. M. Léger replied that the four statesmen had not much time. He added hurriedly and with superficial casualness that no answer was required from us, that they regarded the plan as accepted, that our Government had that very day, at the latest at 5 p.m., to send its representative to Berlin to the sitting of the Commission, and finally that the Czechoslovak officer who was to be sent would have to be in Berlin on Saturday in order to fix the details for the evacuation of the first zone. The atmosphere, he said, was beginning to become dangerous for the whole world.

"He spoke to us harshly enough. This was a Frenchman,—,who conveyed this sentence without right of appeal or possibility of change.

"Mr. Chamberlain did not conceal his weariness. They gave us a second slightly corrected map. Then they had finished with us, and we could go. The Czechoslovak Republic as fixed by the frontiers of 1918 had ceased to exist."

In Prague the blow was not even softened by being delivered through Anglo-French channels. It was the German Chargé d'Affaires who at 6.30 a.m. called the Foreign Minister Dr. Krofta from his bed to hand him the dictates of the Four Powers; the German occupation was to start at midnight that night.

The scenes of hysterical enthusiasm with which Mr. Chamberlain was greeted as he returned from the complete betrayal of

Czechoslovakia to Germany, the champagne banquets with which Paris celebrated M. Daladier's dishonouring of France's bond and his conversion of it into an open threat against her ally to enforce surrender, were in Prague read like reports of a revolution in the moon. They were words conveying no meaning to the Czechs in the bitterness of their despair and disgust, in the humiliation inflicted on them by their friends and allies. They kept very sober. How, they asked, had Labour been squared to let this go through, this new betrayal? Doubtless by the good old Tory tactics of descending to the "common level" and "placing themselves in the hands of" the Opposition by revealing hair-raising figures of national and international unpreparedness while exaggerating Germany's war potential.

"British journalists, and French too", one Czech diplomat said quietly, "may as well pack up and go."

"You want to expel them?" I asked.

"We? Nothing to do with us. But do they think that their papers will print much news from Czechoslovakia after this? They will try to make their readers forget that the country which their Governments have betrayed so shamefully ever existed."

"Chamberlain has just played a clever hand against us, with the unfriendliness towards our nation and the affection for Herr Hitler that in our hearts we had always expected", was a typical comment. "It is for the Government of France that our people have the bitterest loathing, because of a betrayal unexampled in history. In the humiliation of defeat, without having been allowed to lift a hand in our own defence, there is only one consolation. With our elimination as an independent State, our inevitable reduction to the rôle of Germany's vassal, France disappears as a first-class Power from the map of Europe. Henceforth Hitler will be free at any moment to throw his full military power against the frontiers of France. And while Britain and France may struggle to increase their military strength, that of Hitler will increase at a far more rapid ratio. The army of a million and a half which we have under arms to-day can never be replaced by the Western Powers who have to-day destroyed it. France will stand henceforth without an ally among those States who, like ourselves, once trusted her word. To-day, too, France has become worthless as an ally for Russia. The fate which she has now earned will not long be withheld from *la grande nation* who has betrayed us under circumstances

far more shameful than those of the partition of Poland. And if Germany one day calls on our army to secure that 'self-determination' for Alsace Lorraine or the German minority of Poland which has been imposed in Czechoslovakia to-day, she will not find it reluctant."

To speak of "acceptance" of the Munich Dictation by the Czechoslovak Government is to use a word which in this connection has no meaning. This emerges alone from the wording of the Munich communiqué which speaks of the "agreement between Germany, Great Britain, France and Italy", and says that these Powers "have agreed on the following conditions and procedure and declare themselves individually responsible for their fulfilment.

"The evacuation begins on October 1st." The Powers mentioned "agree that the evacuation shall be completed by October 10th, without destruction of any of the existing installations, and that the Czechoslovak Government bears the responsibility" for this. The Powers (without Czechoslovakia) agree to dismember her. And Czechoslovakia is "held responsible" for seeing that at the operation she loses the stipulated quantity of blood.

All details, including determination of plebiscite areas, were left to be fixed by an international commission of these four Powers, with Czechoslovakia added. But in the sessions of the Committee subsequently held in Berlin, Czechoslovakia was treated much as she was in Munich. Her representations went entirely without support from Britain and France, only the Italian Signor Attolico pleading—from motives, of course, of self-interest—in some cases for moderation of the severities. A right of option was provided, but nothing was done to protect the hundreds of thousands of loyalists, Czechs, German Democrats and Jews in the territories to be occupied, no offer made by France or Britain to provide an asylum for these unfortunates whose desperate plight was created by the action of these two Powers. Later came the "gesture" of Lord Halifax—Britain would take 350 refugees—out of thousands who were in deadly peril. And when the lists were drawn up by the refugee committees, the British Government struck out a number of names of those in the most deadly peril and refused to accept them. Nothing was done to prevent the embittered and exasperated Czechs now under reactionary leadership from declaring, as they subsequently

did, that they could not increase by the number of these refugees the population of their truncated and terribly impoverished State, and that whatever their political views, they had had once and for all enough of Germans in their country.

“ Under protest to the world ”, said the official announcement of the capitulation issued in Prague on the morning of Saturday, October 1st, Czechoslovakia had yielded.

“ Under the Presidency of the Republic the Government met at noon yesterday in the Hradschin to consider the international, political and military situation created by the decisions taken by the four Great Powers at the Munich conference of September 29th, which had been conveyed to the Czechoslovak Republic in the morning. The Government examined all details of these decisions. After perusing from every angle and considering all the urgent recommendations transmitted by the French and British Governments, and in full consciousness of its historic responsibility, the Czechoslovak Government had to make up its mind to accept the Munich decisions of the four Great Powers. This the Government has done in the consciousness that the nation must be preserved and that no other decision was possible to-day.

“ The Government of the Czechoslovak Republic, in taking this decision, makes at the same time its protest to the whole world against the decisions of Munich, which were taken one-sidedly and without Czechoslovak participation.”

The tragic news had been conveyed to the public at five o'clock the preceding evening in a moving broadcast by Premier General Syrový. Addressing his hearers as “ citizens and soldiers ”, he said :

“ You know that my comrades-in-arms never hesitated in the world war to sacrifice their lives for the life of the nation. I am living through the most terrible hour of my life. I am now fulfilling a task so painful that to die would in comparison be easy. But just because I have fought and know what conditions are necessary to win a war, I have to tell you as Army Commander that the force ranged against us at this moment compels us to recognise its superiority, and to act accordingly. Before speaking these words I have considered everything. In these days I have lived through again the whole of our past struggle.

“ In Munich, four Great Powers met together and decided to

demand of us the acceptance of new frontiers which separate the German-speaking areas from our State. They confronted us with the choice between a desperate and hopeless defence which would have meant the sacrifice of the whole younger generation, their wives and their children, and the acceptance of the conditions forced upon us—and without war—which in their ruthlessness are unexampled in history. We have wished indeed to contribute to the maintenance of peace, but never in the manner now imposed upon us.

“ We were abandoned. We stand alone. All our neighbours to the north and south stand under arms. We are a fortress besieged by forces infinitely stronger than our own. All your leaders, together with the heads of the army and the President of the Republic, have weighed all possibilities. In the choice between the reduction of our frontiers and the death of our nation we have felt it our sacred duty to preserve the life of the people.

“ To yield to four Great Powers ”—this was the first intimation to the Czechoslovak people that Britain and France were also arrayed against them—“ and enormous military superiority is not dishonourable.”

Then General Krejčí, the Commander-in-Chief, read out to the army the order of surrender.

“ Soldiers ! ” it ran. “ Under the pressure of world events the Government of the Republic has had to agree to the surrender of certain areas of our State to the Reich. Western Europe, including our allies, categorically calls upon us for this sacrifice. We are soldiers who must always be ready to suppress all our own feelings. Those at the head of our State have always had our fullest confidence, and we know that they have done everything which lay within human power. Our army has not been beaten, and fully retains its good name. The Government and the nation will find us ready always for every sacrifice.”

The army, standing to its guns with splendid spirits out on the frontiers, had, unlike the civilians in Prague, not the faintest idea that such a blow could fall. Within an hour from the reading of this order, and the further detailed orders for evacuation, the *morale* of the splendid and unweakened force was gone. Throughout mobilisation, the days of self-dedication and all the excitement attendant on approaching war I had not seen one person, soldier or civilian, affected by drink. Now, as officers at the front told me, came complete reaction. Men of all ages



stood with tense, white faces and the tears came into their eyes as the surrender order was read out. Then, for a while at least, discipline broke down. Men flung away their arms, blindly cursing, and sought to drown their shame and misery in deep intoxication. They were not defeated—but the army was no more. At the peak of their strength, heroically keyed up to make the supreme sacrifice of life, they discovered that all had been for nothing. They were an unwanted army of an entirely defenceless country. For them it was the end of all. With the greatest difficulty could units be rallied to defend the country against the hordes of marauding terrorists whom the Polish and Hungarian Governments sent in to spread destruction and disorder as an accompaniment to Mr. Chamberlain's peace with honour.

For the nation at large it was only the beginning of Calvary. Another demand loudly voiced for weeks with a hail of accompanying insults and slanders over the German radio, had to be fulfilled—the Head of the State must go. On October 5th, at 7 p.m., Edouard Beneš stepped before the microphone to say farewell as President to the people of the Republic which he and Masaryk had founded and whose destinies, firstly in foreign affairs and latterly altogether, he had guided for twenty years. He had built up a strong and sturdy State and had built it into a strong system of alliances. The key ally had ratted, his whole policy collapsed, and even without the German demands he would doubtless have chosen to go.

“I had intended”, Beneš said, “to lay down my office immediately after the decisions taken about us at Munich. To-day I believe that under the present conditions I am taking the right step. I remain what I have always been, a convinced democrat, and therefore I am leaving the field. I feel it is for the best not to disturb the new European constellation which is arising. We did our utmost to reach understanding with other nationalities, and we went to the extreme limit of possible concessions.

“Do not expect from me a single word of recrimination.” (And what words he could have addressed, especially to the Government of Britain, whose attitude had for years been one of barely concealed bitter enmity towards him!) “But this will I say, that the sacrifices demanded from us were immeasurably great and immeasurably unjust. This the nation will



never forget, even though they have borne these sacrifices quietly. I acted according to what I believed to be my duty. We sought peace with all our neighbours, but there was a refusal to recognise our goodwill, and, in the end, everyone turned against us. I am not leaving the ship in the midst of a storm, but I believe it is a political necessity for me to go."

A fortnight later it was made a "political necessity" by Germany for the President to go from his native country into exile. Then, at long last, came the chance for his handful of enemies in Czechoslovakia to play Germany's game by avenging themselves for years of impotence by slandering the man to whom more than to any Czech still living the country owed its foundation and the preservation for twenty years of its frontiers. Because at the last a betrayal without precedent in history had made Beneš feel it impossible to keep these frontiers longer, they declared that he had "cost Czechoslovakia a third of her territory!"

Long before this—indeed within a few hours of the Munich decisions—the whole tragedy of the Nazi triumph in Austria was being repeated. Once again, as the Czechoslovak troops withdrew or even before it, brown-shirted brutality was given full rein. The plundering, the beating, the destruction of property, the deadly insults to other races—for now the Czech minority had to join the Jews in the label of "sub-humans"—set in throughout the Sudeten territory. And once again, to its credit, the German Army declined to share in the orgy of beastliness indulged in by Reichsgerman and Sudeten Nazis alike. (General von Beck had threatened resignation in the summer as a protest against Hitler's war plans, and the Reichswehr was throughout without enthusiasm for the whole campaign against Czechoslovakia.) Once more came the pitiful stream of refugees—Jews, German democrats, Leftists and Czechs—those who escaped arrest, kidnapping and deportation to concentration camps. And now, in their bitterness, the new Czechoslovak authorities did something for which it is hard to find an excuse: they ordered back the German and Jewish refugees, who had stood staunchly by the Republic through years of the Henlein terror, to invaded territory. In many cases the local authorities, particularly the gendarmerie, who had long been subject to reactionary influences, rounded up the terrified fugitives at the bayonet's point, and forced them into trains from which

more than one flung himself or herself in desperation, preferring this death to that which the Nazis would give.

“It is the business of those who made these people fugitives, Britain and France, to save them, not ours”, was the reply of the Czechs. “We appeal to their representatives on the Berlin commission, we appeal direct to London and Paris for something to be done in the way of providing an asylum for these people, and we get no reply. After all that has been done to us, we have learned the lesson from example of complete egoism. It is not our job to play philanthropist to the victims of Franco-British dictation. Nor have we the power. Germany presses daily to have these victims delivered up, and what Germany wants done to-day, we must do. You should talk to Berlin, not us.” In Prague the central authorities declared that no one politically compromised need go back, but unfortunately it was many days before, at long last, full effect was given to this rule, and in the meantime innumerable tragedies had occurred. The well-meant subscriptions to the Lord Mayor’s fund rather missed the mark; what was wanted was not cheques for hundreds of thousands of pounds, so much as a couple of thousand visas for men and women in danger of being extradited to concentration camp and death. So little attention was paid in Prague to the Lord Mayor of London’s kindly meant visit. “He is just bringing out conscience money,” many people said bitterly, “and should use it to buy a magnificent wreath in the British colours to be placed on the nameless graves of the victims of the Nazis.” And the £10,000,000 loan from London was characterised as niggardly—“The cost to Britain of thirty-six hours of the last world war, and perhaps of only twenty-four hours of the war which they sacrificed us to avoid”.

Nothing was missing from the repetition of the Austrian horrors which I have dealt with so fully that I will only ask you to turn back to the first part of this book and read them in here, remembering that this time it was the deliberate action of the British and French Governments, with their eyes wide open and their hearts closed like the jaws of a steel trap, which produced them. Even the horror of the Burgenland Jews marooned in the Danube was paralleled when hundreds of Jewish men, women and children, with old, sick and pregnant women among them, were stripped of their possessions and thrust out by the Henleinists beyond the frontier of the German troops. And the

sullen, embittered Czechs standing on "guard" on the other side of the three-kilometre zone maintained between them and the Germans long refused asylum to these victims of Britain and France, leaving them to sleep in the ditches of No-Man's-Land, . . . Some were at last given temporary asylum, others driven back to the Sudeten hell.

Wenzel Jaksch, leader of the German Social-Democratic Party, crippled as he was, flew to London to beg visas for the more endangered of his followers, and came back with a load of sympathy and promises, but—at first—no visas. "I called", he said, "on Lord Runciman and reminded him of how he had told me in Prague that he came as 'the friend of all and the enemy of none'. 'Now', I told him 'that you have proved your friendship for one side, the Henleinists, and secured them all they desired, we German democrats are in desperate peril and in need, too, of your friendship and succour from the danger of death and torture.' Lord Runciman told me, 'I believe that the Lord Mayor is opening a fund for you all, and if so, you will certainly find my name on the list of contributors'. I picked up my hat and crutches and left."

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### CLOSING DOWN

OVER THE WEEK-END OF OCTOBER 1ST AND 2ND I SAW the curtain rung up in the lost provinces on the first scene of the last act of Czechoslovakia's tragedy. In the South, in Zone I, around Ceske Krumov and in the North around Zone II—between Ceske Lipa and Reichenberg—I watched the Republic's unbeaten but broken troops, with their powerful field and siege artillery, tanks, armoured cars, field-guns, massed machine-guns and motorised infantry, retreating in long columns towards the interior. There was none of the singing on the march which the Czech soldiers love so well by these sullen and embittered men. The officers rode erect—looking straight ahead with unseeing eyes. If they saw anything, it must have been the untouched fortifications, containing incidentally many of the secrets of the Maginot Line built in by French engineers, which they had just surrendered intact to the enemy.

I talked to a number of them, and found that even in this hour of bitterness they were doing their duty with courage and discipline.

“Last night”, the young officer who the day before had commanded at Kreibitz, now abandoned to the Germans, “Henleinist Storm-troopers attacked my outpost from three sides with heavy rifle-fire. I got hold of the Henleinist burgomaster and told him that unless he caused the attack to cease, I should return the fire, despite my orders only to do so in the last extremity. The burgomaster said, of course, ‘Those are all Communists, and I can’t control them’. I told him, ‘I have never before seen Communists with Swastika armlets, German army rifles and German steel helmets, but Communists or Henleinists, I am going to fire on them’. Thereupon the burgomaster went off and spoke to the men, who stopped the attack. The burgomaster then admitted, of course, that they were Henleinists. When the shooting recommenced before my

withdrawal this morning, I had to blow up a couple of bridges to hold them back."

I drove on towards Kreibitz itself, but on the crest of high, wooded hills I was stopped short at a barricade of barbed wire right across the road, linking up the powerful forts concealed in the forest on either side. The commandant of this little post of Kreuzbuchen told me :

"You can't go on. Just round the corner is Kreibitz, and I can let no one through. The Nazis are in control there and the Storm-troopers running amok. I have no orders myself, and if the Nazis or the Reichswehr try to pass before I have received them, I shall fight. I am not going to be overrun." His orders came that same night, and two days later the Reichswehr held his fortifications.

Refuging in his post were six unshaven, battle-scarred customs officers from Kreibitz, who had defended themselves there all night against Henleinist attacks, losing one man killed. Their experience was being multiplied a thousand-fold up and down the frontier.

While I stood there two Henleinist boys of fifteen or so cycled up from the Czech side of the line and tried to get through. The officer stopped them and searched them for arms.

"You have no idea", he said, "of the quantities of arms which young monkeys like this have received from Germany." But these boys had nothing but picture postcards of Hitler in their pockets. "Get home to your mothers and keep out of mischief," the officer told them, returning their postcards contemptuously. "Your hero will be here quite soon enough, thanks to our very gallant allies."

Along the road, mingling with the troops, came the pitiful string of refugees, some with bedding, some with nothing—the orders for the Czech outposts not to let them through were not yet universally applied, but on the outskirts of Prague everyone was scrutinised and refugees turned back. In Ceske Lipa I talked to the refugees collected in a dance-hall—its gilded stucco work and heavy cut-glass chandeliers contrasting with the piles of straw for bedding on the floor. Some of them had been shunted back and forth across the country to and from various refugee camps for days. Such was the hopelessness and despair among them that the day before 400 of the least compromised had consented to go back and take their chance under the Henlein

terror. They told me of the wave of Jewish and other suicides which had started as in Vienna. In the territories about to be occupied I talked to many of the Germans who were remaining. With the exception of one bunch of Henleinist boys, they were entirely without enthusiasm. Everyone to whom I spoke who was over thirty—I picked them quite at random, and there were no Jews amongst them—expressed greater or less concern at the prospect of annexation by Germany. And they were all members of the Henlein Party. “We gave no mandate to Henlein for this,” they said. “We wanted him to secure us autonomy, some sort of home rule, to improve our economic position, increase employment and develop trade. But annexation—after what has happened in Austria? It was never in our thoughts.”

One Czechoslovak officer, a friend of mine, told me of his experiences on the Teschen front opposite the Poles when the end came. Just as on the German front by Henleinists, the Czechoslovak troops after mobilisation were constantly sniped at and ambushed for three days by Polish civilians, but the Polish troops took no part in the attacks. “The most horrible part of it”, my friend said, “was that we had to obey the order to retreat from a ragged, under-fed, ill-armed and ill-clad army such as the Poles sent against us here, who could not believe their eyes when they saw our magnificent military machine actually recoiling before them without a struggle. They came across to our men and in amazement felt the good wool of our fine uniforms and compared it with their own shabby shoddy, and said, ‘Your country must value its army before everything, that it should spend such money on common soldiers. For us they do nothing.’ Despite the heat, the officers made them keep on their greatcoats, to hide their shabby uniforms. The Polish armament was deplorable—their assorted rifles were of three types—modern Mausers of our own manufacture, old Imperial Austrian Mannlicher rifles, and French ‘*chassepots*’ of 1895, or thereabouts. Then, to impress and overawe us, their Divisional Command sent up three decrepit tanks; they got within several hundred yards of their own positions and then collapsed. In the end we had to send them across a team of oxen to drag them out of the ditches into which they had landed. The Polish troops were flabbergasted to see that our men got meat every day. To fight and be defeated is the lot at some time or other of every soldier. To have to retreat through treachery without firing a

shot from impregnable forts before the Reichswehr was tragedy and shame enough. But to have to do the same before this poor, frightened, would-be friendly rabble which was apparently the best which the Poles could send forward against us—that was the most horrible thing which could ever be demanded of any soldier.”

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“ Why, then, if the Czechs had such a perfect military machine, as you say, did they not after all make some desperate attempt at least to sell their liberty dearly, especially if, as you suggest, they were sure of the backing of Russia? ” you may well ask at this juncture. It is a question to which you should insist on getting an answer, and not only from me. Look back to General Syrový’s announcement of the capitulation. “ To yield to four Great Powers ”, he said, had been no disgrace. How come, General Syrový—you yielded to *four* Great Powers? Then you were *threatened* by four Great Powers? It is not a threat to tell a man you will not stand by him if attacked, no matter how sacred your previous promises to do so, merely desertion. Czechoslovakia’s surrender to Berchtesgaden had been procured by desertion. What made her go further, and while already under arms and at the peak of her strength, as she was not at the Berchtesgaden moment, commit national suicide? What if after Munich Mr. Chamberlain had gone a little further, and had the Czechs told that if they attempted to defend themselves with the aid of Russia they would have to reckon with Britain supporting—morally, at least—a German invasion? You don’t believe it? Well, the Czechs did. Ask your M.P. to question Mr. Chamberlain in the House—and to phrase his question very carefully and leave no loopholes.

“ You have said Soviet Russia’s support was assured. What happened to that support? ” you may again justly ask me. I suggest you glance back to the chapter in which I described the General Staff plans for co-operation of Britain, France and Russia, with Czechoslovakia against a German assault. Think over the rôle of Rumania, and then ask your M.P. to ask for you what Mr. Chamberlain caused to be said to Rumania during these most critical days concerning what would happen to her if she tolerated the passage of Russian aeroplanes above or of Soviet troops across her territory to the assistance of Czechoslovakia if she were attacked.



Incidentally, there were masses of anti-Czechoslovak stories launched by pro-German circles in these critical times concerning Russian support of Czechoslovakia. A Bucharest paper with no political tendencies published the following. A Professor of Czernowitz University complained to the Commandant of the Rumanian local garrison, "Since the Berchtesgaden ultimatum of Britain and France to Czechoslovakia, there is no peace in Czernowitz. Every time I look up, I see an aeroplane flying from the direction of Russia towards that of Czechoslovakia." The military commandant stared at him for a second, said "Then don't look up", and went on signing mobilisation papers.

Another question for your long-suffering M.P's. Earl de la Warr had a five-hour conversation in Geneva with Litvinoff, who had with him twenty highly placed Russian staff officers and experts, and was told exactly what Russia was ready to do in co-operation with Britain and France in defence of the Czechoslovak Republic. Earl de la Warr left to consult with Mr. Chamberlain, and saw him on his return from Godesberg. Earl de la Warr never came back or communicated further with Litvinoff. Ask your M.P. to find out why.

"Yes, but you say that Czechoslovakia, quite unaided, would have been able to hold up the hordes from Nazi Germany by her own strength for at least three weeks. Why did she not, then, render at least this service to real democracy, despite her betrayal by *pro forma* democratic politicians?" you may ask me.

Quite right, keep on asking. But now let me ask you one. Have you ever heard of the Fifth Column? Of course you have. Well, do you recollect how I wrote of the day after the Berchtesgaden betrayal, when the gendarmerie in the Sudeten areas were busily surrendering key positions which they could so easily have held to the Henleinists because they could get no orders from Prague to defend them or themselves? And do you remember what I wrote about the threat to call in Hitler to invade the country rather than let Soviet Russia defend it? The day the Hodza Government fell, the police, also under the Ministry of the Interior, suddenly raided and closed down a number of anti-Fascist newspapers. What has that got to do with it? Well, wouldn't the chance to raise the cry of "Left Revolution" if there had been reaction to this provocation have been invaluable to a Fifth Column just at this juncture? And here is another thing. The night of the acceptance of Berchtesgaden, the Fifth

Columnists in Prague had prepared everything for the proclamation of a state of siege, and were only overawed by the great street demonstrations. And that afternoon the Vienna (Czech-language) and Leipzig broadcasts declared, perhaps inaccurately: "A Czech political group has been formed under Beran, leader of the Right-Wing Agrarians, which has decided to call on the Führer to march in against the Czech Communists."

Let me suggest another interesting line of thought. As early as July, American newspapers were reporting the existence of financial negotiations in Berlin between certain British financial groups having close connections with the Bank of England and German Nazi banks concerning the participation of British capital in the exploitation of the Sudeten areas—after they should have been acquired by Germany. In July, too, the great Zivnostenska Bank did a curious thing. It acquired in the Brüx-Dux coal areas the biggest coalfields in the Czechoslovak Republic, the property of the Petschek concern, with a capital of £3,940,000. Now, the Petscheks were Jews, and they realised that Jewish capitalists would be wise to get out of the Sudeten areas while the going was, if not good, at least still possible. Curious, however, that the Czech Zivnostenska Bank should have thought this a suitable moment to invest Czech capital in this same endangered area, wasn't it? Not quite so curious, though, when you recall that the head of the Zivno Bank was Dr. Jaroslav Preis, and that the day of Dr. Beneš' resignation on the demands of Germany, Dr. Preis was in Berlin talking with General Göring. And that a week later the Prague newspapers had the news, which they were not allowed to publish, and which the censor cut out of my telegram, that (at that moment) it had been arranged that Dr. Preis should become the new President of Czechoslovakia "in view of the necessity of selecting a man who enjoys the confidence of Germany". Lord Runciman saw a great deal of Dr. Preis during the weeks that his "Submission Mission", as a few far-seeing Czech politicians called it, was engineering the submission of Czechoslovakia to Hitler's plans. Dr. Preis also managed to spend quite a lot of time in Berlin, and his relations with the Henleinists were by no means so bad as you might have feared they would be between a leading Czechoslovak financier and this local branch of Hitler and Co., Ltd. And finally, you will find if you make a few enquiries that the financial far-sightedness of Dr. Preis is very highly esteemed

in the City of London—particularly in those circles which were negotiating in Berlin.

Just after the collapse of Czechoslovakia, you will remember, we found a British official—"the brains of the Runciman Mission"—in Berlin urging a preferential customs system, if not a full customs union between Germany and Rump Czechoslovakia on the grounds that the Sudeten areas which the Mission had urged should be annexed by Germany "could not live without the Czech hinterland for markets and supplies". Britain promised a £10,000,000 "conscience money" loan to Czechoslovakia immediately after the surrender to Germany—and thereby got off cheaply. Did it ever occur to you that this loan did not go to the democratic Republic of Czechoslovakia, with its wonderful army, and its powerful alliances with France and Soviet Russia, but to the new State, which, as Mr. Chamberlain's carefully-thought-out policy had ensured, was no longer a barrier to, but was already doomed to become a tool of, Fascist Germany's expansionist and hegemonistic schemes? In other words, support refused to a keystone of the non-Fascist group of States was promptly forthcoming for the newly acquired area of Fascist interest. You never thought of it like that? No, of course you did not. You were not intended to—any more than you were intended to remark that Mr. Chamberlain's action ensured that the same severe terms as demanded at Godesberg were carried out against the democratic Republic of Czechoslovakia through the Munich dictation, with the tactful proviso that all the details of the dirty work of Godesberg should now be carried out discreetly behind the closed doors of the Berlin Ambassadors' Conference. At Godesberg they were put on paper for all the world to see. No more were you intended to see through the gigantic Franco-British Governmental spooof of preparing to "go to war" to give that assistance to Czechoslovakia which both before and afterwards they had in fact refused to give, or to put to yourself the questions which, as I have written earlier, the Czechs put to themselves about what really passed between Chamberlain and Hitler at Godesberg.

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Hot on the heels of the tiger came the hyena and jackal for their share of the corpse of Czechoslovakia. And the British lion, which had hunted the stricken country into the tiger's jaws, looked majestically on. Where now were those paper "guaran-

tees " which it had been declared were already in force for what remained of Czechoslovakia after the tiger had sated itself? Where was that high-sounding policing of the frontiers by the Guards' Battalion, later whittled down to the thousand men of the British Legion who were to stand between the ravening Storm-troopers of Henlein and Hitler and their defenceless prey, saving them—and the rags of Britain's sullied honour—now that the fortifications and terrific armaments of Czechoslovakia had gone, with their deadly whistles and walking-sticks? All was conveniently dropped and the swindle slurred over. At Tilbury they marched the thousand duped legionaries aboard the ship and they marched them off again. The whole farce was easily hushed up and forgotten. Mr. Chamberlain seems to have learned a trick or two, and then some, from his more experienced colleagues in Fascism. The Göbbels system can always be relied on to work. Never hesitate to make promises. You will never need to carry them out. Trust to the short memory of the public, and have some new swindle ready to put across in the Press and the radio you control, and you will have no trouble!

So the Poles marched in and tore from the helpless corpse of the Republic all they could digest and more, swallowing in the process a Czech minority double the size of the little handful of Poles they claimed, and incidentally seizing Naboth's one absolutely indispensable coalfield to add to their own enormous sources of coal supply. A new flood of plundered and stricken refugees set in from Teschen, where Polish chauvinism and violence raged unchecked. The Hungarians came with their old haughty claims. The delay in the satisfaction of these arose over quarrels between the beasts of prey. Germany wanted to preserve truncated Czechoslovakia, now entirely under her control, as a basis for the future invasion of the Soviet Ukraine and the launching of the attack on the Rumanian oilwells. Poland and Hungary, supported by Italy, sought to partition Ruthenia between them and build up a Polish-dominated, anti-German, anti-Soviet bloc. Poland and Hungary armed and sent across bands of snipers led by reserve officers of their regular forces to try to effect a junction, and with difficulty the Czechs and Slovaks managed to rally their beshamed and demoralised troops sufficiently to hold them up for a time. Slovakia snatched an autonomy amounting almost to full separation, and everywhere Slovaks satisfied private ambitions by

driving out Czech officials into the overcrowded Czech provinces, until the Prague newspapers had to appeal to the new Slovak authorities to stay their hand. A fully Fascist, Anti-Semitic Government took power in Slovakia, and as the Hungarian troops marched in to take over Slovakia's granary, the "Schütt Island", the mobs of Bratislava were turned loose on the Jews. There in November I saw scenes of wreckage and terror of which no Nazi need have been ashamed. In a trice the entire Balkan peninsula was seething with excitement and the spirit of war. The partition of Czechoslovakia everywhere placed long-settled frontiers in jeopardy. Every State with a minority—and all in Central and South Eastern Europe have several—rushed feverishly to arms to protect its frontiers. Every State which could dig out claims to the territory of another because it had co-racials under the latter's rule, rushed to arms to be ready to reclaim them. All this had always been foreseen if Czechoslovakia were to be touched. Leaving aside the nice point of with or without honour, Mr. Chamberlain, was this peace?

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Among the stricken refugees, among the Czech troops in the remotest village, I found the name of one Englishman on everybody's lips. It was not that of Neville Chamberlain, nor that of Walter Runciman of Doxford. It was that of a gentleman variously referred to as "Lord Admiral Duff" or "High Admiral Lord Cooper". Two days later the crowds in Prague were struggling in the streets to get copies of the papers containing Mr. Duff Cooper's speech, and felt that here was one Englishman who had seen something of the truth. There were many points in it which found an echo in Prague.

"During the last four weeks we have been drifting daily nearer to war with Germany," Duff Cooper had said. "We never said, until the last moment, and then in the most uncertain tone, that we were prepared to fight. We knew that information to the opposite effect was being poured into the ears of the head of the German State, and that he had been reassured and fortified in the opinion that in no event would Great Britain fight." They had said that the people of Britain would not fight for Czechoslovakia. But it was not for Czechoslovakia that they would fight, and the people of Britain were ready, grim and determined. "It was not for Serbia nor for Belgium they fought in 1914. We were

fighting then for the principle that one great Power should not be allowed to dominate by brutal force the continent of Europe." The guarded statement of the Prime Minister in the House on March 24th was not the language that dictators understood. It meant nothing to people with the mentality of Mussolini or Hitler. Throughout these days the Prime Minister had talked to Hitler in the language of sweet reasonableness, but he would have been more open to the language of the mailed fist. Mr. Chamberlain had returned from Berchtesgaden with proposals wrapped up in a cloak and called self-determination. They meant partition of a country, cession of territory. Sweet reasonableness had won nothing except terms which a cruel and revengeful enemy would have dictated to a beaten foe after a long war. "Crueller terms could hardly be devised than those of the Berchtesgaden ultimatum. I said to myself that if those terms were accepted it would be the end of all decency of conduct of public affairs in the world. . . . Having accepted partition, Czechoslovakia should have been saved the humiliation of having to submit to the ignominy and horror of invasion. After Naboth had agreed to give up his vineyard, he should have been allowed to pack up his goods. The German Government having got their man down, were not to be deprived of the pleasure of kicking him, or the German army of its loot. Britain was left with a tremendous commitment—to guarantee and defend a frontier that she had at the same time destroyed. It was as though we had dealt a man a mortal blow and at the same time insured his life."

And when the Prime Minister said, "We must feel profound sympathy for a small and gallant nation in the hour of her national grief and loss", an unnamed Opposition Member said, "It was an insult to say it". To that unknown member the Czechs were deeply grateful for voicing the sentiments which they all felt and which one paper expressed thus, "Let those who have betrayed us cut short their snivelling sympathy for 'gallant little Czechoslovakia', and leave us alone in our misery. Slimy epithets heal no poisoned wounds."

There were other speeches, too, which seemed in Prague to show a sense of reality. Mr. Attlee said that it had been a tremendous victory for Herr Hitler, who had achieved merely by a display of military force what four years of war failed to achieve for Germany. He had destroyed the last fortress of democracy



in Eastern Europe. He had opened up the way to supplies of fuel, oil and resources which he required to consolidate his military power.

“Most people in this country believe that the Czechs have been shamefully betrayed by those who professed to stand by them. The central fact is that the map of Europe has been forcibly altered by the threat of war by Herr Hitler. In doing so he has struck at the rights of life of all civilised people. If he does this—and he has done it with impunity—there is no longer any peace in the world. Seven years of National Government have brought us to a more dangerous position—a more humiliating position—than any we have occupied since the days of Charles II.”

“The Prime Minister,” said Sir Archibald Sinclair, “has weakened the foundations of democracy as well as of peace. Confronted by the ruthless determination of Hitler he has wilted, and respect for the sense of justice and for treaties was passed to the winds.”

Mr. Eden said that no German minority anywhere else in Central or Eastern Europe was enjoying to-day privileges equal to those which the Sudeten Germans had always had.

Mr. Dalton brought out the fact of the threat made to the Czechs in the Anglo-French *démarche* made at 2 a.m. on September 21st, that if the Czech Government did not unconditionally and at once accept the Anglo-French plan, it would stand before the world as solely responsible for the coming war. (It was a fact of which I had had full confirmation at the time through the Czechoslovak Foreign Office.)

Then came the hammer-blows of Winston Churchill.

“All that the Prime Minister has gained for Czechoslovakia has been that the German dictator, instead of snatching the victuals from the table, has been content to have them served to him course by course.” Many people believed that they were only giving away the interests of Czechoslovakia, whereas he feared that they had deeply compromised and perhaps fatally endangered the safety, and even the independence, of Great Britain and France. There was no difficulty in having cordial relations between the British and German peoples. But never could there be friendship between the British democracy and the Nazi Power, which derived strength and perverted pleasure from persecution and used with pitiless brutality the threat of murderous force. What he found unendurable was the sense of



Britain falling into the power of Nazi Germany and of her existence becoming dependent on its goodwill or pleasure.

Mr. Acland, too, had given eye-witness testimony of Nazi brutalities. He had himself seen in Prague a young Czech woman with a Swastika branded on her chest with a red-hot iron, and had spoken with the doctor who that morning had treated an eight-months-old baby with a Swastika the size of a shilling on its face. Those were the devils to whom Britain had handed over these decent and innocent people.

Harold Nicolson said that Germany wanted Czechoslovakia because it was not only going to be a strategic danger to Germany, but a political danger, in that it was making a success of democratic institutions in Europe. We had given away not merely the question of Czechoslovakia, but the whole key to Europe. The Prime Minister had said, "I have got my bit of paper. I have got my little arrangement with Hitler." "The impression created abroad by that bit of paper was that for the first time in 250 years Britain had abandoned her policy of preventing by every means in her power the dominance of Europe by a single Power." Yes, Mr. Nicolson, and more than that. It created abroad the impression that Britain had now its first Fascist Premier, eager to ally his country with Nazis and Fascists for war against Soviet Russia.

However, Mr. Chamberlain explained that he thought the Government deserved the approval of the House for its conduct of affairs, "which had saved Czechoslovakia from destruction and Europe from Armageddon". And the House gave him that approval.

Has he got yours? As I see things out here, after twenty years' experience in Germany and Central Europe—too long, you will say, perhaps, to be able to realise what are the interests of the British people any longer—the vital defences of pacific Europe against a world war and the world hegemony of Germany have been given up without a blow by the surrender of the bastions of Austria and Czechoslovakia which barred Hitler's way to the reserves without which he might start but could never win the world war towards which his own testimony in *Mein Kampf* shows him to be moving. And I see as the result of Munich something which in my view is far worse than these, the purely foreign political results. I see the shadow of dictatorship, the dark clouds of Fascism with their concomitant—

suppression of free speech, of a—still partially—free Press, of self-government, and the introduction of the rule of the cudgel and concentration camp—coming very near to Britain. I think Mr. Churchill saw it too, when he told America on October 16th, “The stations are closing down; the lights are going out”. There was still time, he believed, for those to whom freedom and parliamentary government meant something to consult together. He spoke of the abandonment and ruin of the Czechoslovak Republic, and said:

“We must recognise that the parliamentary democracies and liberal peaceful forces have everywhere sustained a defeat. We are confronted with another theme. It is not a new theme; it leaps out upon us from the Dark Ages—racial persecution, religious intolerance, deprivation of free speech, the conception of the citizen as a mere soulless fraction of the State. Will you wait until British freedom and independence has succumbed?” It is a question which I, with roots in both countries, can only echo and applaud. For I see the democratic liberties of the people of Britain to gain and preserve which they fought a great war, beheaded one king and drove another from the throne, being stealthily filched from them. The end result when they have been taken away while the British people dozes, lulled by the thought that “it can’t happen to us”, will be precisely the same as in Germany where these rights were suddenly and violently snatched away. You cannot suppress free speech, free writing and free thought without the concentration camp, the dog-whip, the length of lead piping, the “suicide in the cell” and the shooting “while attempting to escape” at the back of you.

How softly trod Monsignor Seipel when first I went to Austria in 1925—how persuasive his slogans! “True” democracy was what he wanted—the “freedom of the streets”—disarmament of “party armies”. And what he achieved was the “Bloody 15th of July” in 1927, the Dollfuss and Schuschnigg Dictatorships, the destruction of the opposition Press and Parliament, the bombardments of February 1934. Had he mentioned these in 1925 as his aims he would have been overthrown in twenty-four hours.

And how softly has Mr. Chamberlain trod so far, and how attractive his slogan—“Chamberlain and Peace—the other men’s war”! How little—until the Sandys case—did the public know that the Official Secrets Act, passed to prevent espionage in

war, was being abused to silence criticism of autocratic Government methods and Government deficiencies in a Jesuitical manner which would have made "Old Mole Seipel" rub his hands in smiling appreciation! Twice already in the first three weeks after Munich has Herr Hitler proclaimed Chamberlain to be a ruler for Britain after his own heart and hinted with unmistakable menace that Britain will exchange him under her hated democratic system for another at her own peril. Only last winter von Ribbentrop had the impertinence to demand on the opening of Mr. Chamberlain's beloved Anglo-German conversations the suppression in the name of the Führer of criticism in Britain of Nazi leaders and Nazi methods. Already Mr. Chamberlain takes his arbitrary decisions in foreign policy, committing Britain more and more deeply to support of the anti-democratic tyrannies and increasingly refuses to recognise the existence of the House of Commons save to summon it as Hitler does the puppet Reichstag, to register approval of his actions. Always it is "not in the public interest" for the representatives elected by the nation to conduct its affairs to know anything of Chamberlain's schemes until it is too late to rectify them. And when the leader of His Majesty's Opposition ventures to say that some action of the Premier—his sell-out to Hitler at Munich—has been a disaster, Führer Chamberlain accuses him of fouling his own nest and enviously remarks that in a Nazi country this would be impossible.

What is this but a yearning for the concentration camp to silence political opponents? What is it but self-deification, totalitarianism and intolerance? To suggest that Mr. Chamberlain has made a pretty foul mess of his own particular nest is distorted into an allegation that the critic has himself fouled the nest of Great Britain, of the whole Empire. Like Hitler, Mr. Chamberlain, his friends say, is a victim to that most perilous illusion that he has a direct mission from God and that criticism is thus blasphemy. Truly the lights of liberty are going out and the stations closing down—and at an increasingly rapid pace in Britain. There is still time, I believe, for the overthrow of this pre-Fascist regime before it achieves full totalitarianism—but only just time. And for the purpose clear-sightedness, vigour and energy are required such as the slogan-drugged masses of Britain have recently shown few signs of possessing. There are those who know and are not afraid to

speak out—Mr. Wickham Steed in his new "Penguin" book on the Press, for example, tells some interesting things; the *New Statesman's* article on "Muzzled Britain" in its issue of November 12th deals extensively with this growing peril. What British democracy needs is the drive to immediate action which the Fascists show if at this eleventh hour it is to be saved from Chamberlainism.

\* \* \* \* \*

Hitler's repayment for Mr. Chamberlain's inestimable services to him was not long delayed. On October 9th he shouted to Britain that "this tutelage of foreign governesses is something that Germany cannot and will not stand". True, he found a sentence of casual thanks for Mr. Chamberlain amidst his usual outpourings against democracies. But he made an ominous statement which to those who can read the language of Hitler aright comes little short of a threat of war if Britain should change her Government.

"At any moment a Chamberlain could be succeeded by an Eden, a Duff Cooper or a Churchill. If these men were to obtain power, we would know clearly and beyond doubt that their aim would be to unleash immediately a world war against Germany. This obliges us to be vigilant and always aware of the necessity to assure the protection and defence of the Reich."

Is this not an attempt to influence the choice of Government in Britain? Does it not amount to something like a threat of a preventive war if there is a chance of the statesmen he mentions coming to power? I think it does.

As for the way in which the Czechoslovak surrender has placed the Balkans and the Near East at Germany's mercy, Herr Funk, the Minister of Economics, boasted openly of this after his triumphal tour to Yugoslavia, Turkey and Bulgaria. The drive, reported the *Daily Telegraph* Berlin correspondent, would go on through Persia and Afghanistan up to the frontiers of India. The demand is raised in Berlin for the inclusion of Switzerland in the German Customs system. In Czechoslovakia, the Republic of Masaryk and Beneš has been destroyed. No one can hold Government office of whom the Nazi dictatorship does not approve; no one becomes President without the *cachet* of Hitler. In Prague and Chust, as in Berlin, Brussels and London, Germany is pulling the strings of "Ukrainian National Committees" which are to-become the bases of the attacks on

Poland and Russia. Politically, socially and economically the country is dependent on Germany for the possibility of eking out any kind of existence, and must adjust itself to this fact. No wonder that alongside "Hitler Square" and "Mussolini Avenue," the appreciative Nazis have given to many a Sudeten town its "Runciman Street."

\* \* \* \* \*

On a warm day this summer I was sitting on the lovely flower-banked terrace of the Richmond Park Hotel at Karlsbad—now seized by the Germans, for the owner was a Jew—with a man whom I am glad to be able to call my friend, although he moves in a world of wealth and influence far removed from mine. We talked of Austria. I told him of how a month before I had seen the menacing head of Nazi Fascism raised here too, as fanatic columns of Henleinists streamed past this very spot with the old dervish incantations of Vienna—"Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!—*Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer!*"

"Yes," he said, "this horrid thing is on the march, and against it there seems to be only one active force—militant Socialism. As you know, I am not and never could be a Socialist. I belong to the town-house, country-mansion, automobile and dinner-jacket class. Socialism probably—Communism certainly—would deprive me of most of the good things of life which I now enjoy—not, I hope, selfishly. But this other thing—Nazism, Fascism—call it what you will—is too hideous to contemplate. The other night I was talking all this over with my wife, who is a very wise woman, and she said:

" 'We of the well-to-do classes with cultured and liberal minds must always fight against the danger of either Socialism or Fascism putting an end to our pleasant and useful existences. But if the choice—which God forbid—should ever be forced upon us, I should feel that we were being compelled to choose between perishing in the drought of Fascism and the flood of Socialism—perhaps of Communism. Both, drought and flood, destroy, and either way, our sort of life would come to an end. But when the drought has passed, it leaves behind it an arid desert where nothing new can live. After the flood subsides, new forms of life spring up, some monstrous, some young, vigorous and healthy—we see it in this world of ours to-day. I think, dear, that you and I could never choose the drought.' "

And you?





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